

**Supplemental Statement****Pursuant to the Foreign Agents Registration Act of 1938, as amended**For Six Month Period Ending 10/31/12

(Insert date)

**I - REGISTRANT**

1. (a) Name of Registrant

Olivia Goumbri

(b) Registration No.

5957

(c) Business Address(es) of Registrant

901 Dryden St.  
Silver Spring, MD 20901

2. Has there been a change in the information previously furnished in connection with the following?

(a) If an individual:

- |                           |                              |  |
|---------------------------|------------------------------|--|
| (1) Residence address(es) | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (2) Citizenship           | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |
| (3) Occupation            | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> |

(b) If an organization:

- |                          |                              |                             |
|--------------------------|------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| (1) Name                 | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (2) Ownership or control | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |
| (3) Branch offices       | Yes <input type="checkbox"/> | No <input type="checkbox"/> |

(c) Explain fully all changes, if any, indicated in Items (a) and (b) above.

**IF THE REGISTRANT IS AN INDIVIDUAL, OMIT RESPONSE TO ITEMS 3, 4, AND 5(a).**3. If you have previously filed Exhibit C<sup>1</sup>, state whether any changes therein have occurred during this 6 month reporting period.Yes ☐ No ☐If yes, have you filed an amendment to the Exhibit C? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, please attach the required amendment.

<sup>1</sup> The Exhibit C, for which no printed form is provided, consists of a true copy of the charter, articles of incorporation, association, and by laws of a registrant that is an organization. (A waiver of the requirement to file an Exhibit C may be obtained for good cause upon written application to the Assistant Attorney General, National Security Division, U.S. Department of Justice, Washington, DC 20530.)

4. (a) Have any persons ceased acting as partners, officers, directors or similar officials of the registrant during this 6 month reporting period?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position	Date Connection Ended
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(b) Have any persons become partners, officers, directors or similar officials during this 6 month reporting period?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Residence Address	Citizenship	Position	Date Assumed
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5. (a) Has any person named in Item 4(b) rendered services directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, identify each such person and describe the service rendered.

(b) During this six month reporting period, has the registrant hired as employees or in any other capacity, any persons who rendered or will render services to the registrant directly in furtherance of the interests of any foreign principal(s) in other than a clerical or secretarial, or in a related or similar capacity? Yes ☐ No ☒

Name	Residence Address	Citizenship	Position	Date Assumed
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(c) Have any employees or individuals, who have filed a short form registration statement, terminated their employment or connection with the registrant during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position or Connection	Date Terminated
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(d) Have any employees or individuals, who have filed a short form registration statement, terminated their connection with any foreign principal during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Name	Position or Connection	Foreign Principal	Date Terminated
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6. Have short form registration statements been filed by all of the persons named in Items 5(a) and 5(b) of the supplemental statement?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, list names of persons who have not filed the required statement.

## II - FOREIGN PRINCIPAL

7. Has your connection with any foreign principal ended during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒  
If yes, furnish the following information:

Foreign Principal

Date of Termination

8. Have you acquired any new foreign principal(s)<sup>2</sup> during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☐ No ☒  
If yes, furnish the following information:

Name and Address of Foreign Principal(s)

Date Acquired

9. In addition to those named in Items 7 and 8, if any, list foreign principal(s)<sup>2</sup> whom you continued to represent during the 6 month reporting period.

Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

10. (a) Have you filed exhibits for the newly acquired foreign principal(s), if any, listed in Item 8?

Exhibit A<sup>3</sup> Yes ☐ No ☐Exhibit B<sup>4</sup> Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, please attach the required exhibit.

- (b) Have there been any changes in the Exhibits A and B previously filed for any foreign principal whom you represented during this six month period? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, have you filed an amendment to these exhibits? Yes ☐ No ☐

If no, please attach the required amendment.

2 The term "foreign principal" includes, in addition to those defined in section 1(b) of the Act, an individual organization any of whose activities are directly or indirectly supervised, directed, controlled, financed, or subsidized in whole or in major part by a foreign government, foreign political party, foreign organization or foreign individual. (See Rule 100(a) (9)). A registrant who represents more than one foreign principal is required to list in the statements he files under the Act only those principals for whom he is not entitled to claim exemption under Section 3 of the Act. (See Rule 208.)

3 The Exhibit A, which is filed on Form NSD-3 (Formerly CRM-157) sets forth the information required to be disclosed concerning each foreign principal.

4 The Exhibit B, which is filed on Form NSD-4 (Formerly CRM-155) sets forth the information concerning the agreement or understanding between the registrant and the foreign principal.

**III - ACTIVITIES**

11. During this 6 month reporting period, have you engaged in any activities for or rendered any services to any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each foreign principal and describe in full detail your activities and services:

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All activities were of a political nature. They are described in response to item 12 of section III (see attachment)

12. During this 6 month reporting period, have you on behalf of any foreign principal engaged in political activity<sup>5</sup> as defined below? Yes ☒ No ☐

If yes, identify each such foreign principal and describe in full detail all such political activity, indicating, among other things, the relations, interests and policies sought to be influenced and the means employed to achieve this purpose. If the registrant arranged, sponsored or delivered speeches, lectures or radio and TV broadcasts, give details as to dates, places of delivery, names of speakers and subject matter.

see attached logs.

13. In addition to the above described activities, if any, have you engaged in activity on your own behalf which benefits your foreign principal(s)? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, describe fully.

<sup>5</sup> The term "political activity" means any activity that the person engaging in believes will, or that the person intends to, in any way influence any agency or official of the Government of the United States or any section of the public within the United States with reference to formulating, adopting or changing the domestic or foreign policies of the United States or with reference to political or public interests, policies, or relations of a government of a foreign country or a foreign political party.

## IV - FINANCIAL INFORMATION

## 14. (a) RECEIPTS-MONIES

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal, any contributions, income or money either as compensation or otherwise? Yes ☒ No ☐

If no, explain why.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies.<sup>6</sup>

Date	From Whom	Purpose	Amount
5/1/12-10/31/12	Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	fee	35,000
5/17/12	Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela	travel and lodging for Latino Congreso	1,200
			\$36,200
			Total

## (b) RECEIPTS - FUNDRAISING CAMPAIGN

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received, as part of a fundraising campaign<sup>7</sup>, any money on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, have you filed an Exhibit D to your registration? Yes ☐ No ☐

If yes, indicate the date the Exhibit D was filed. Date \_\_\_\_\_

## (c) RECEIPTS-THINGS OF VALUE

During this 6 month reporting period, have you received any thing of value<sup>9</sup> other than money from any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement, or from any other source, for or in the interests of any such foreign principal?

Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Foreign Principal	Date Received	Thing of Value	Purpose
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6, 7 A registrant is required to file an Exhibit D if he collects or receives contributions, loans, moneys, or other things of value for a foreign principal, as part of a fundraising campaign. (See Rule 201(e)).

8 An Exhibit D, for which no printed form is provided, sets forth an account of money collected or received as a result of a fundraising campaign and transmitted for a foreign principal.

9 Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks," and the like.

**15. (a) DISBURSEMENTS-MONIES**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you

(1) disbursed or expended monies in connection with activity on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement? Yes ☐ No ☒

(2) transmitted monies to any such foreign principal? Yes ☐ No ☒

If no, explain in full detail why there were no disbursements made on behalf of any foreign principal.

If yes, set forth below in the required detail and separately for each foreign principal an account of such monies, including monies transmitted, if any, to each foreign principal.

Date	To Whom	Purpose	Amount
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Total

**(b) DISBURSEMENTS-THINGS OF VALUE**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you disposed of anything of value<sup>10</sup> other than money in furtherance of or in connection with activities on behalf of any foreign principal named in Items 7, 8, or 9 of this statement?

Yes ☐No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date	Recipient	Foreign Principal	Thing of Value	Purpose
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**(c) DISBURSEMENTS-POLITICAL CONTRIBUTIONS**

During this 6 month reporting period, have you from your own funds and on your own behalf either directly or through any other person, made any contributions of money or other things of value<sup>11</sup> in connection with an election to any political office, or in connection with any primary election, convention, or caucus held to select candidates for political office?

Yes ☐No ☒

If yes, furnish the following information:

Date	Amount or Thing of Value	Political Organization or Candidate	Location of Event
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<sup>10, 11</sup> Things of value include but are not limited to gifts, interest free loans, expense free travel, favored stock purchases, exclusive rights, favored treatment over competitors, "kickbacks" and the like.

## V - INFORMATIONAL MATERIALS

16. (a) During this 6 month reporting period, did you prepare, disseminate or cause to be disseminated any informational materials?<sup>12</sup>

Yes ☒ No ☐

If Yes, go to Item 17.

(b) If you answered No to Item 16(a), do you disseminate any material in connection with your registration?

Yes ☐ No ☐

If Yes, please forward the materials disseminated during the six month period to the Registration Unit for review.

17. Identify each such foreign principal.

Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela

18. During this 6 month reporting period, has any foreign principal established a budget or allocated a specified sum of money to finance your activities in preparing or disseminating informational materials? Yes ☐ No ☒

If yes, identify each such foreign principal, specify amount, and indicate for what period of time.

19. During this 6 month reporting period, did your activities in preparing, disseminating or causing the dissemination of informational materials include the use of any of the following:

- ☒ Radio or TV broadcasts      ☒ Magazine or newspaper      ☐ Motion picture films      ☐ Letters or telegrams  
☐ Advertising campaigns      ☒ Press releases      ☒ Pamphlets or other publications      ☒ Lectures or speeches  
☐ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

**Electronic Communications**

☒ Email

☒ Website URL(s): www.venezuela-us.org

☒ Social media websites URL(s): www.twitter.com/vzlaembassyus, www.facebook.com/vzlaembassyus

☐ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

20. During this 6 month reporting period, did you disseminate or cause to be disseminated informational materials among any of the following groups:

- ☒ Public officials      ☒ Newspapers      ☐ Libraries  
☒ Legislators      ☒ Editors      ☒ Educational institutions  
☐ Government agencies      ☒ Civic groups or associations      ☒ Nationality groups  
☐ Other (specify) \_\_\_\_\_

21. What language was used in the informational materials:

☒ English

☒ Other (specify) spanish

22. Did you file with the Registration Unit, U.S. Department of Justice a copy of each item of such informational materials disseminated or caused to be disseminated during this 6 month reporting period? Yes ☒ No ☐

23. Did you label each item of such informational materials with the statement required by Section 4(b) of the Act?

Yes ☒ No ☐

<sup>12</sup> The term informational materials includes any oral, visual, graphic, written, or pictorial information or matter of any kind, including that published by means of advertising, books, periodicals, newspapers, lectures, broadcasts, motion pictures, or any means or instrumentality of interstate or foreign commerce or otherwise. Informational materials disseminated by an agent of a foreign principal as part of an activity in itself exempt from registration, or an activity which by itself would not require registration, need not be filed pursuant to Section 4(b) of the Act.



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**VI - EXECUTION**

In accordance with 28 U.S.C. § 1746, the undersigned swear(s) or affirm(s) under penalty of perjury that he/she has (they have) read the information set forth in this registration statement and the attached exhibits and that he/she is (they are) familiar with the contents thereof and that such contents are in their entirety true and accurate to the best of his/her (their) knowledge and belief, except that the undersigned make(s) no representation as to truth or accuracy of the information contained in the attached Short Form Registration Statement(s), if any, insofar as such information is not within his/her (their) personal knowledge.

(Date of signature)

(Print or type name under each signature or provide electronic signature<sup>13</sup>)November 27, 2012/s/ Olivia GombrieSigned

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<sup>13</sup> This statement shall be signed by the individual agent, if the registrant is an individual, or by a majority of those partners, officers, directors or persons performing similar functions, if the registrant is an organization, except that the organization can, by power of attorney, authorize one or more individuals to execute this statement on its behalf.

<b>FARA Reporting Log</b>			<b>Olivia Gombri May 2012-Oct 2012</b>			
<b>Date</b>	<b>Person Contacted</b>	<b>Position/Title</b>	<b>Organization</b>	<b>Contacted</b>	<b>Subject Discussed</b>	<b>Position Advocated</b>
3-May-12	Teddy Miller	staffer	Office of Barbara Lee	email	elections in Venezuela	consider witnessing
3-May-12	Anya Stiglitz			email	elections in Venezuela	consider witnessing
3-May-12	Kenya Handy	staffer	Office of Yvette Clarke	email	elections in Venezuela	consider witnessing
4-May-12	Alem Tewolderberhan	staffer	Office of Sheila Jackson Lee	email	elections in Venezuela	meet with Venezuelan official
4-May-12	James Gomez	intl relations director	Rainbow Push	email	elections in Venezuela	meet with Venezuelan official
11-May-12	Antonio Gonzalez	director	Willie Velazquez Institute	email/phone	Latino Congreso	consider hosting dinner with Venezuela official
15-May-12	Sean Sweeney	director	Cornell Global Labor Institute	email/phone	Venezuelan labor law	consider sponsoring event on new law
21-May-12	list serve	general public		email	Afro descendant month	attend event on subject
21-May-12	Jared Ball	radio host	WPFW	email	Afro descendant month	attend and promote events
22-May-12	list serve	general public		email	elections in Venezuela	respect results of elections in Venezuela
23-May-12	Cornell West	author, activist		email	elections in Venezuela	consider witnessing
23-May-12	list serve	general public		email	Afro descendant month	attend event
23-May-12	James Early	activist		email	Afro descendant month	consider speaking at and attending event
23-May-12	Quito Swan	professor	Howard University	email	Afro descendant month	consider speaking at and attending event
25-May-12	Hilary Shelton	international relations director	NAACP	email	convention	have Venezuelan official speak
5-Jun-12	Juliett Hooker	professor	UT-Austin	email	law against racial discrimination	have Venezuela official speak
11-Jun-12	Victor Coronado	activist	LatinoRebelde	email	educational info on Venezuela	consider distributing information
15-Jun-12	Nicole Lee	president	TransAfrica Forum	in person	elections in Venezuela	witness elections
15-Jun-12	Nicole Middleton	assistant	Danny Glover	email	elections in Venezuela	consider speaking about experience during elections in Venezuela
15-Jun-12	Naom Chomsky	author/professor	Tufts	email	Sao Paulo Forum	attend forum
18-Jun-12	Chuck Kauffman	activist	AFGJ	email	elections in Venezuela	send around information on elections in Venezuela
18-Jun-12	Bruce Wilkinson	activist	AFGJ	email	elections in Venezuela	send around information on elections in Venezuela
18-Jun-12	James Jordan	activist	AFGJ	email	elections in Venezuela	send around information on elections in Venezuela
21-Jun-12	Sophia Lafargue	staffer	Office of Gregory Meeks	email/in pers	elections in Venezuela	consider witnessing elections

28-Jun-12	list serve	general public		email	independence celebration	attend event
28-Jun-12	list serve	general public		email	elections in Venezuela	review information on elections on website
16-Jul-12	Oscar Chacon	presdient	NALAAC	email	elections in Venezuela	consider witnessing elections
18-Jul-12	Ben Ramos	activist	Prolibertad	email	celebration in soildarity with Venezuela	attend and promote
19-Jul-12	Larry Moskowitz	activist	Labor Left Project	email	celebration in soildarity with Venezuela	attend and promote
19-Jul-12	Cassie Regan	activist	ANSWER	email	celebration in soildarity with Venezuela	attend and promote
29-Aug-12	list serve	general public		email	elections in Venezuela	pass on information to others
30-Aug-12	david Gesspass	president	NLG	email	elections in Venezuela	speak at event on elections
30-Aug-12	Sharon Black	activist	All Peoples Congress	email	social justice in Venezuela	host event with Afro-Venezuelan students
10-Sep-12	listserve			email	elections in Venezuela	review and pass on to others
12-Sep-12	list serve	general public		email	elections in Venezuela	attend event
20-Sep-12	list serve	general public		email	elections in Venezuela	review information on elections and pass on
5-Oct-12	Democracy Now!			email	elections in Venezuela	cover elections on program
6-Oct-12	lisa Sullivan	activist	SOA Watch	email	media coverage of elections	consider writing letters or calling into programs
6-Oct-12	James Early	activist/author		email	elections in Venezuela	consider giving press interviews about experience during elections in Venezuela
6-Oct-12	Susan Scott	lawyer	NLG	email	elections in Venezuela	consider giving press interviews about experience during elections in Venezuela
7-Oct-12	listserve			email	elections in Venezuela	review and pass on to others
7-Oct-12	listserve			email	elections in Venezuela	review and pass on to others
7-Oct-12	listserve			email	elections in Venezuela	review and pass on to others
7-Oct-12	listserve			email	Danny Glover congratulates Venezuela on democratic elections	read and pass on to others
9-Oct-12	list serve			email	elections impressions by votin machine makers	read and pass on to others
15-Oct-12	Teddy Miller	staffer	Office of Barbara Lee	email	elections in Venezuela	meet with Venezuelan official
15-Oct-12	Sophia Lafargue	staffer	Office of Gregory Meeks	email	elections in Venezuela	meet with Venezuelan official
15-Oct-12	Lisa Williams	staffer	office of Eni Faleomavega	email	elections in Venezuela	meet with Venezuelan official
15-Oct-12	Eric Williams	staffer	Office of Karen Bass	email	elections in Venezuela	meet with Venezuelan official
15-Oct-12	Kenya Handy	staffer	Office of Yvette Clarke	email	elections in Venezuela	meet with Venezuelan official

22-Oct-12	list serve			email	elections in Venezuela, impressions by Americans	read and pass on to others
31-Oct-12	list serve	general public		email	election Impressions by Delahunt and Glover	respect results of elections in Venezuela


Dear friends and colleagues,

If you are in the DC area this week I hope you will join us for this event on Thursday in honor of Afro-descendent month, which is May. A cocktail reception will follow this photo exhibit, lecture and dance workshop. You can see the full event flyer attached.

Best, Olivia

## Photo Exhibit on Afro-Venezuelan Culture at the Bolivarian Hall

Published: 05/18/2012

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In honor of the Afro-Descendent Month in Venezuela, the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. presents a lecture and photographic exhibit on Afro-Venezuelan culture on Thursday, May 24 at 7pm, at the Bolivarian Hall.

The exhibit, entitled “Malembe y Mondongo,” includes photographs by Heather Hodges, a Washington-based human rights lawyer. The accompanying lecture will be given by Howard University researcher

Mesi Walton. She will share her experiences learning about the history and traditions of Afro-Venezuelan communities, their cultural contributions, and links with the larger the African diaspora.

Immediately following her presentation, Walton will offer an Afro-Venezuelan dance workshop.

### About the Presenters

The photographer Heather Hodges graduated from the Tulane Law School with a specialization in human rights. In 2010 and 2011, she was a member of “Women’s Rights and Public Policy” at Georgetown University Law School, where she researched the challenges of access to justice among Central American women and did fieldwork in Belize and Washington, DC. Her documentary photography was a central part of her research.

Researcher Mesi Walton has a master's degree from Howard University's Department of World Languages and Cultures. Her research is focused on African peoples in the diaspora and their cultural retention, particularly as it relates to dance, music, and songs. In 2008, she embarked on a year-long anthropological study in Venezuela and Colombia. While in Venezuela, she studied dance and music theory at Fundación Bigott, an institution that specializes in traditional theater arts in Venezuela. She makes frequent research trips to Venezuela and Colombia.

In 2005, the National Assembly of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela the month of May as Afro-Descendent Month, and May 10 as Afro-Venezuelan Day. In honor of these events, the country has organized events at home and abroad to continue supporting policies implemented by President Hugo Chávez that promote the inclusion and recognition of the Afro-Venezuelan population.

**What:** Photo Exhibit and Lecture on Afro-Venezuelan Culture

**Where:** Bolivarian Hall (2443 Massachusetts Ave. NW, Washington DC 20008)

**When:** Thursday, May 24, 2012 at 7pm

**Press Office – Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / May 17, 2012**

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This material is distributed by Olivia Gombri, on behalf of the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

Dear friends and colleagues,

I thought you would be interested in the recent visit of Tibisay Lucena, the president of Venezuela's National Electoral Council, to Chicago where she discussed Venezuela's upcoming elections and improvements to Venezuela's electoral system at the National Latino Congreso. You can also view a news segment of her visit here (in Spanish):

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQLj3\\_AVISw&list=UUFSp73q-NOBRQ\\_V0PpzN12A&index=1&feature=plcp](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQLj3_AVISw&list=UUFSp73q-NOBRQ_V0PpzN12A&index=1&feature=plcp)

Cheers, Olivia

<http://venezuela-us.org/2012/05/19/latino-organizations-call-on-u-s-government-to-recognize-and-respect-venezuelas-presidential-elections/>

## Latino Organizations Call on U.S. Government to Recognize and Respect Venezuela's Presidential Elections

Published: 05/19/2012

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The 6th National Latino Congreso held in Chicago approved on Friday a resolution congratulating Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) for its "exemplary efforts" at voter empowerment and civic engagement in the country's electoral processes, and called on the U.S. government to recognize and respect the outcome of the upcoming Venezuelan presidential elections.

The resolution was approved in a plenary session at which the President of the National Electoral Council, Tibisay Lucena, spoke about the role of the Latino vote in the U.S. and the importance of active citizen participation in the processes of societal transformation.

"We were invited by the Latino Congreso, an organization we have worked with very closely and that has participated in previous electoral processes in Venezuela," Lucena said during her

presentation. She was pleased by the fact that members of the Congreso are interested in the advances of the Venezuelan electoral system with respect to participation and inclusion.

"Since nearly 2003, our staff at the CNE has been working tirelessly to ensure that the people's will be transparent, secure, reliable, and facilitate the process of the country's electoral system," Lucena said.

Before a coalition of organizations, leaders, Latino activists and media outlets, the president of the CNE highlighted the progress of Venezuela's electoral system and the interest of the CNE in inviting more international electoral accompaniers for the coming elections.

"The eyes of the world are on Venezuela in each election, hence, we want to invite important personalities so we can show them the Venezuelan electoral system," she said.

Among those participating in the plenary session were Antonio Gonzalez, president of the Southwest Voter Registration Education Project (SVREP), an organization aimed at promoting Latino voter participation in the U.S.

"It was very important for the delegates of the Latino Congreso to have the opportunity to hear some comments by President Tibisay Lucena, since information about Venezuela does not go in depth here in the U.S.," Gonzalez said after the plenary session. During his presentation, the Latino leader highlighted Venezuela's "great achievement" for having a National Electoral Council with "such a deep and participative" electoral system.

The National Latino Congreso has been held since 2006 and was founded to create an "open space" for analyzing and designing strategies for public policy and the political agenda of communities of Latino origin in the U.S., including domestic and international perspectives.

#### **U.S Civil Rights Organization to Visit Venezuela**

Lucena's agenda in Chicago included a meeting with Reverend Jesse Jackson, a prominent civil rights activist and founder of the Rainbow Push Coalition. During the meeting, Lucena invited reverend Jackson to visit Venezuela to learn about how the country's electoral system works and participate as an electoral accompanier in the coming elections.

"I expected, as part of my visit, to meet with Reverend Jesse Jackson to invite him to Venezuela after and during this year's elections so he can see our electoral process," Lucena said.

"I'm impressed with the idea that Venezuela continues in the path to increase an open, free and transparent democracy, inviting international observers to watch the process," said Reverend Jackson. "We accept this invitation to meet with officials of the government, opposition, religious leaders and several actors in the society to ensure the world that the electoral process is open, free, fair, transparent and be recognized by the world," said Reverend Jackson after the meeting.



Lucena and Jackson discussed relations between the U.S. and Venezuela and the need for both countries to restore and deepen diplomatic ties.

"Relations between the U.S. and Venezuela should be restored. We are neighbors, we share the same hemisphere and same resources. We should revive those ties because the union of the U.S. with Venezuela can make them a great force for the wellbeing of humanity. There are many challenges in the whole hemisphere, like violence, drugs, poverty, and we should work jointly for the wellbeing of the peoples," Reverend Jackson said.

Venezuela's National Electoral Council, an independent branch of government, has continued to contact international organizations and personalities to participate as electoral companions during the country's presidential elections on October 7.

**Press Office – Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / May, 19, 2012**

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This material is distributed by Olivia Gombri, on behalf of the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

Dear friends,

If you are in town this Thursday, I hope you will join us for our first event in honor of May, designated as Afro-descendant Month in Venezuela. Find details below.

Best, Olivia



# Malembe y Mondongo

AN EXHIBITION OF DOCUMENTARY PHOTOGRAPHS OF  
TRADITIONAL AFRO-VENEZUELAN CULTURE OPENING MAY 24  
AT THE EMBASSY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA

Join us in the Bolivarian Hall on the evening of May 24, 2012, for the opening reception for "Malembe y Mondongo" an exhibition of documentary photographs of traditional Afro-Venezuelan culture. The evening's program will feature a lecture by Howard University researcher Mesi Walton. Ms. Walton will share what she has learned from her field research into the history and traditions of Afro-Venezuelan communities, their contributions to Venezuelan culture and the ties to the larger African Diaspora. Immediately following her presentation, Ms. Walton will conduct a free Afro-Venezuelan dance workshop open to everyone in the audience. Venezuela is proud to recognize May as Afro-Descendent Month. Doors open at 6:30 pm and the program starts at 7 pm.



Mesi Walton is a recent M.A. graduate from the Department of World Culture and Languages at Howard University. Her research focuses on African people in the Diaspora and their cultural retentions, as it relates to dance, music and song. In 2008, she embarked on a one-year anthropological study in Venezuela and Colombia. While in Venezuela, she was able to study dance, music and theory at Fundacion Bigott, an institution that specializes in traditional Venezuelan performing arts. She regularly conducts study group tours to Venezuela and Colombia.



Photographer Heather Hodges is a graduate of Tulane Law School and a human rights attorney based in Washington. She was a 2010-2011 Women's Law and Public Policy Fellow at Georgetown Law School where she researched challenges to access to justice for Central American women while doing fieldwork in Belize and the District of Colombia. Documentary photography is central to her field research and advocacy. In 2011, she traveled to Venezuela with Ms. Walton as part of a study group tour of Afro-Venezuelan culture.

## May 24, 2012 – 7:00 PM

Bolivarian Hall, 2443 Massachusetts Ave NW, Washington D.C.

Doors Open at 6:30 pm. RSVP to [cultura@venezuela-us.org](mailto:cultura@venezuela-us.org).



Embassy of the Bolivarian  
Republic of Venezuela

Olivia Burlingame Gombri  
Social Outreach Adviser  
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This material is distributed by Olivia Gombri, on behalf of the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela.  
Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

Dear friends,

I hope you will be able to join us as a special guest in celebrating the 201<sup>st</sup> anniversary of Venezuela's independence on Thursday, July 5<sup>th</sup> at 7:30pm at the Bolivarian Hall, 2443 Massachusetts Ave, NW. We are very excited to commemorate this important date with a concert by La Sardina de Naiguata, a group rooted in Carnival and Afro-Venezuelan rhythms, and the inauguration of the Heroines of Our America exhibit. A reception will follow.

I hope to see you then! Please let me know if you will be able to join us.

Best, Olivia



*On the occasion of the 201<sup>st</sup>  
Anniversary of the Independence of the  
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela*

*Chargé d'Affaires, a.i.  
Dr. Angelo Rivero Escritos*

*Requests the pleasure of your company  
at a concert by  
La Gardina de Naiguatá*

*And the inauguration of the exhibit*

*The Heroines of our America*

*On Thursday, July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2012  
At 7.30 p.m.*

*Reception to follow*

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Dear friends and colleagues,

As you may know, Venezuela's presidential elections are fast approaching and will be held on Oct. 7, 2012. Local and state races will soon follow at the end of the year and in the beginning of 2013. Unfortunately, much of the information in the international press about our polls appears to be biased and politically motivated rather than well studied and investigated. For that reason, I invite you to review the newest section of our website, solely devoted to our upcoming elections.

In this section you will find detailed information in **English** (<http://venezuela-us.org/2012/06/01/elections-2012/>) and **Spanish** (<http://venezuela-us.org/es/2012/06/01/elecciones-2012/>) on the history of Venezuela's electoral system, voter security and privacy, civic participation and accessibility, as well as the latest news on the elections, all directly from the National Electoral Council (CNE), the official body that oversees and carries out elections in Venezuela, as well as the Embassy. For an overview I suggest you begin with the short documentary featuring interviews with CNE President Tibisay Lucena, as well as dynamic footage documenting the experience of international electoral authorities and others during Venezuelan elections.

If you have any questions please do not hesitate to contact me and I hope this section will serve as an important resource for you.

Sincerely, Olivia

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Dear friends and colleagues,

I thought you would be interested in the article on the electoral system in Venezuela. <http://venezuela-us.org/2012/08/29/carter-center-affirms-venezuelan-elections-are-historically-fair/>

Best, Olivia

## Carter Center Affirms Venezuelan Elections are Historically Fair

Published: 08/29/2012

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Jennifer McCoy of the Atlanta-based Carter Center said in an interview with *Infobae Latinoamérica* that her organization's observer missions to Venezuela have found that the country's electoral system is safe and trustworthy.

"There is a system of pre-electoral auditing to audit the software, hardware, and voting machines in which the political parties are able to say whether those audits are

alright and are functioning correctly," McCoy said.

McCoy also stressed the role of post-electoral audits in Venezuela, which she said "are done to see if the official electronic results coincide with the vote counting. They have done the counting and they have never had any significant discrepancy between the paper receipts and the electronic votes."

McCoy, who is the head of the Carter Center's Americas Program, said that her organization will be present during Venezuela's presidential elections this October 7 only as an "informal observer" because they did not have the funding needed to organize something larger.

"We decided we want to have a more informal role in observing the political developments in which we can carry out some interviews with political actors and national observers to see how they view the electoral process in Venezuela," she explained.

The journalist who interviewed McCoy suggested that the results might be very close, leaving room for contention, to which the expert argued that in her experience Venezuela's electoral system is safe.

McCoy rejected the possibility of fraud, saying that the electoral process has many guarantees. She indicated that the system is trustworthy all the way from the registration of candidates to the voting itself.

"The automated system in Venezuela is very sophisticated... the machines identify the voter by fingerprinting and the fingerprint has to coincide with the identification number of the individual, and this prohibits voter fraud," she said.

Footage of the interview is available [here](#) in Spanish.

**YVKE Mundial/ Press- Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S./ August 29, 2012**

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Dear friends and colleagues,

With less than a month before Venezuela's presidential elections, I wanted to share this interesting article by Professor Steve Ellner published in *Le Monde Diplomatique* with you. For more information on the elections remember to check our election webpage: <http://venezuela-us.org/2012/06/01/elections-2012/>

Best, Olivia

## The Chávez Election

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By Steve Ellner

Source: Le Monde Diplomatique  
Friday, September 07, 2012

"You pay back a favour with favours," said Joanna Figueroa, a resident of El Viñedo, a barrio in the coastal city of Barcelona in eastern Venezuela. She had pledged to work for the reelection of Hugo Chávez after receiving a house as part of the government's ambitious Great Housing Mission programme. She helped build it, as part of a "workers team" that included a bricklayer, a plumber and an electrician appointed by her community council. Her job was to mix cement. As Chávez followers keep saying of their feelings towards their president, "You pay back love with love." The frequency with which the phrase is used shows the deep emotional bond that exists between Chávez and many Venezuelans.

Much is at stake in the presidential election due on 7 October. The opposition's candidate, Henrique Capriles Radonski, calls himself a reformer, free of any sort of ideology. Even so, he belongs to the conservative Justice First Party (MPJ), which stresses private investment and questions the effectiveness of state economic controls. The opposition has grown wiser since its failed coup in 2002 and its decision to boycott national elections. Now, opposition leaders fervently defend the 1999 constitution — which they opposed at the time, despite its overwhelming adoption in a popular referendum — and have even achieved a degree of unity under Capriles, nominated after a primary in February.

The achievements of the Housing Mission, building thousands of homes for the poor and including barrio residents in their planning and execution, does much to explain Chávez's

lead in the polls. The opposition's claims that it is winning have a hollow ring: Chávez opponent and media owner Rafael Poleo recently attributed the "barren" results of an opinion poll in May to Capriles's "failure to go anywhere". The Datanálisis survey gave Chávez a 43.6% to 27.7% lead over Capriles. It also indicated that 62.4% of voters rate Chávez's performance as above average; 29.4% consider it poor. Datanálisis is the most credible of the polling agencies with an impressive record. That its findings favour Chávez must annoy its owner, Luis Vicente León, who openly sides with the opposition.

Chávez's lead is surprising as an erosion of support and enthusiasm for his movement is only to be expected after 13 years in power. His recent bout with cancer (his illness was originally announced without revealing the nature of the disease) might also not have helped. The opposition is quick to point out that the Chávez movement lacks a second-in-command who could step into the presidency and retain the nation's confidence. And pro-establishment media, in Venezuela and abroad, tie the issue of Chávez's health to the electoral contest: media expert Keane Bhatt notes that Reuters, Associated Press and the *Miami Herald* have stressed Capriles's "youthful energy" in contrast to Chávez's "frailty" (1).

The president's illness has now made his movement pay attention to his leadership, and even he has begun to recognise the downside of his all-encompassing power: while ministers have come and gone, Chávez — whose face appears on most Bolivarian political posters — stands as the sole embodiment of a political process that now depends upon him.

On a visit to Brazil in April 2010, he was asked about letting another leader emerge. "I do not have a successor in sight," he answered. But there may be a change in thinking. Last year Chávez told a former adviser, the Spanish academic Juan Carlos Monedero, who had warned of the danger of "hyperleadership" in Venezuela: "I have to learn to delegate power more." During his extended medical treatment, several top leaders filled the gap and emerged as possible successors: foreign minister Nicolás Maduro (a former trade union leader), who headed the commission that drafted the new labour law; executive vice president Elías Jaua (popular among the Chávez rank-and-file); National Assembly president Diosdado Cabello (a former army lieutenant with a pragmatic approach and strong backing among the armed forces). In May, the critical Monedero remarked that formerly "some of us saw the difficulties of continuing this process" without Chávez, but "now we have lost this fear because I see dozens of people who could continue the process without any problem."

### **Pragmatism all round**

The key to Chávez's political success is the continuous deepening of change. New programmes and goals, regularly formulated, invigorate the movement rank and file, as in the case of the Housing Mission. Chávez has come a long way since he was first elected president in December 1998, on a rather moderate platform to counter the polemical image he had acquired with his coup attempt seven years before. The moderate stage ended with the approval of a new constitution, the enactment of land reform and other radical social and economic legislation in 2001. Chávez embraced socialism in 2005, then nationalised strategic sectors such as telecommunications, banking, electricity and steel; since 2009 he has expropriated many smaller companies. These measures were accompanied by an escalation of rhetoric against the "bourgeoisie" and the "oligarchy" (terms which Chávez uses interchangeably) as well as against US imperialism.

The expropriations were designed to achieve what Chávez calls "food sovereignty": *state-owned companies are now producing rice, coffee, cooking oil, milk and other foodstuffs*. The latest in June was the production of sunflower oil-based mayonnaise, considered a superior variety. The increase in production and successful management of services, including food processing, banking and telecommunications, show that the government is capable of effective management. Difficulties in state-run heavy industries such as steel, aluminium and cement are the result of labour unrest and the lack of commercial networks. To overcome that, the government has expanded into commerce and sale of construction material direct to the community, eliminating middlemen (who are notorious for creating artificial scarcities).

The UN's Economic Commission on Latin America reports a 21% reduction of poverty rates between 1999 and 2010. But the middle classes do not like this change. A recent survey by the Venezuela Institute of Data Analysis says that though Chávez leads Capriles by 20%, relatively privileged voters support Capriles (with 52.5%; 32.5% for Chávez). Many vehemently oppose Chávez, partly out of fear, provoked by accusations from the opposition aired in the private media, that he means to eliminate private property. There is some evidence of class resentment towards the poor, who receive privileged treatment from government programmes. To neutralise this, the government has passed measures favouring the middle class, such as the sale of dollars at a special preferential exchange rate for foreign travel.

As Chávez has distanced himself from past policies, Capriles claims to be forward-looking. He points out that at 40, he is not tied to the mistaken policies of pre-1998 Venezuela — even those implemented by parties that endorse his candidacy. Capriles associates the “old way of doing politics” with the intolerance and polarisation that characterised the past, as well as the present under Chávez. As proof, he pledges not to scrap but to improve the Chávez social programmes, which have been successful. He proposes to introduce a “Missions Equal for All Law”, which would guarantee equal treatment for non-government supporters in social programmes.

But though the opposition recognises the government’s social advances, the two leaders have conflicting economic policies, shown by their positions on company expropriations. For Chávez supporters, these help to create a mixed economy in the construction, banking and food sectors, in which monopolies and oligopolies now face competition from public companies, which combats artificially created scarcities. “We are in an election year, so why don’t we have the scarcities we had in previous electoral cycles?” asks Irán Aguilera, a state congressman and Chávez supporter. “The answer is that state companies fill the gap created by the private sector for political reasons.”

Capriles has pledged to refrain from expropriating companies. “I’m not going to squabble with businessmen or anyone else,” he says. He claims, without statistics, that production in companies taken over by the state has declined sharply. He omits any reference to restrictions or conditions on foreign investments, which he hopes will help him reach his goal of creating 3m jobs during his presidency. In a proposal with neoliberal implications, Capriles calls for the transformation of the state-run social security programme into a mixed system that would include “voluntary individual savings”. In another electoral statement, the alliance of parties that support Capriles, the Democratic Unity Table (MUD), advocates making flexible the legislation that asserts state control over the oil industry “to promote competition and private participation in the industry” (2).

Capriles is not in the right place to go beyond the middle-class base of his MPJ party. He comes from a wealthy business family with multiple interests (real estate, industry, media), a background uncommon for Venezuelan politicians. He is also the former mayor of the municipality of Baruta, a fairly affluent community in Caracas. His boyish, middle-class appearance is hardly an asset in challenging Chávez’s popularity in the barrios.

**‘A fraud and a failure’**

The MUD calls the Housing Mission "a fraud and a failure" and criticises the government for expropriating land to build housing, and violating city zoning. Even so, the polling firm Hinterlaces indicates that, with a 76% approval rating, the Housing Mission is the most popular government social programme. In May, information minister Andrés Izarra announced that the programme was on target with 200,000 units built since it began in 2011.

True to his military background, Chávez declared the Housing Mission to be an all-out war and enlisted the support of his entire government and movement. In some barrios, students in the makeshift high school programme, the Ribas Mission, receive scholarship money to form construction work "brigades." But the centrepieces are the estimated 30,000 community councils, which date to a law passed in 2006: they hire skilled and unskilled workers, all of whom generally live in the community, and select the beneficiaries. The signature programme builds new houses in place of dilapidated ones. To avoid the previous misuse of funds, there are new mechanisms — paying workers only after jobs are satisfactorily completed, with cheques drawn on state-run banks rather than cash handled via community councils. Steps have been taken to avoid speculation through the resale of public houses. "There's a learning curve in which mistakes made at an earlier stage due to the lack of effective controls are being corrected," says Leandro Rodríguez of the National Congress's Committee on Citizen Participation.

Chávez cleverly chose the eve of the 1 May holiday, at the height of the presidential campaign, to introduce the new Labour Law. This reduces the working week to 40 hours (from 44), bans outsourcing for ongoing jobs and increases pre- and post-natal paid time off to 26 weeks (from 18). It also re-establishes the old system of severance pay, which neoliberal-inspired legislation modified in 1997. On leaving a company, for whatever reason, workers will receive a payment based on their last monthly salary multiplied by the number of years of employment — a major trade union demand. Capriles has attacked the law on the grounds that it does nothing to deal with unemployment or to benefit those with unprotected casual jobs. He claims: "This is a law that Chávez came up with to help him win on 7 October."

The outcome on 7 October will have a major impact throughout the continent. Capriles pledges to reestablish friendly relations with the US, and his close allies promise a thorough revision of Venezuela's aid programmes and alliances with the rest of Latin America. They also plan cheap credit arrangements with China in exchange for oil. When the Iranian

president Mahmoud Ahmadinejad visited in June, Capriles criticised the plethora of agreements signed with Iran, insisting instead that the government "look after the interests of Venezuela by generating employment for Venezuelans".

Chávez has been a major promoter of Latin American unity, leading to the South American bloc organisations: the Union of South American Nations (Uuasur) headed by Chávez confidant Alí Rodríguez Araque), the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (Celac) founded in Caracas last December), and the Bolivarian Alternative for Latin America and the Caribbean (Alba), bringing together Venezuela, Cuba, Bolivia, Ecuador and Nicaragua (3). In June, the Latin American bloc energetically protested the removal of the pro-leftist president of Paraguay, Fernando Lugo, and by doing so, overshadowed the Washington-based Organization of American States and left the US State Department on the sidelines. The firmest response came from Chávez who recalled his ambassador from Asunción and cut off the supply of oil, a measure criticised by Capriles.

### **The hemisphere's enemy number one**

Washington circles view Chávez as the ringleader of these expressions of Latin American nationalism and unity. For the right, and many in the political centre, Chávez is the hemisphere's enemy number one. Three weeks before stepping down as president of the World Bank in June, Robert Zoellick declared that "Chávez's days are numbered" and, with the elimination of his government's foreign subsidies, other nations such as Cuba and Nicaragua will "be in trouble." This chain of events, according to Zoellick, will present "an opportunity to make the western hemisphere the first democratic hemisphere" as opposed to a "place of coups, caudillos, and cocaine." Michael Penfold, writing in *Foreign Affairs*, warned: "If Chávez wins in October, a vast majority of the opposition's political capital will be dashed; in many ways, it will be back to square one" (4).

Even academics who are wary of extreme leftist trends in the continent distinguish between Chávez and other radicals such as Evo Morales. Maxwell Cameron and Kenneth Sharpe, in *Latin America's Left Turn*, claim that while Chávez has "made efforts to politicise state institutions... [and] create an official party under his control... Morales embodies a political movement in which the role of the leader is not to monopolise power" (5).

That Chávez has gone further than his leftist counterparts in Bolivia, Ecuador and elsewhere is also recognised on the other end of the political spectrum. Jeffery Webber, a Trotskyist



academic and co-editor of a book on the Latin American left, views Morales as a "reconstituted neoliberal" but applauds Chávez's movement for "having done a great deal to rejuvenate the international critique of neoliberalism and to bring discussion of socialism back on the agenda" (6).

There is good reason why political actors and analysts of different ideological convictions single out Chávez for special treatment. Widespread expropriations and other reversals of neoliberal economic measures, the creation of a popular militia, the firm control of the armed forces, and the generous funding of programmes of international cooperation that bolster Venezuela's standing in Latin America are distinguishing features of the Chávez government unmatched elsewhere.

### **Deepening of change**

A Chávez victory in October will mean further deepening of change in Venezuela. New expropriations will create a mixed economy in important sectors stimulating competition between public and private companies. Chávez's proposals for 2013-2019 call for state incursions into commerce and transport, to the detriment of middlemen, through the creation of "centres of local distribution for the sale and direct distribution of products."

Another far-reaching goal outlined in Chávez's electoral platform is the expansion of the power of community councils. Several hundred "communes in construction" group a dozen or more community councils each to undertake projects covering a wide area, such as gas and water distribution. Chávez proposes to promote the creation of new communes to represent 68% of the population. The communes are to be granted the same prerogatives as state and municipal governments, including budgeting, participation in state planning and, eventually, tax collection.

A Chávez victory will feed into the "left tide" in Latin America at a critical moment and will undermine US influence. The record of the left-leaning bloc and its banner of Latin American unity has been mixed recently. In 2009, the right triumphed in the presidential elections in Chile, but the popularity of its president Sebastián Piñera subsequently plummeted. In 2010, centrist candidate Juan Manuel Santos was elected president in Colombia, but he soon rallied to the shared aim of Latin American unity under the auspices of the left, and he has even allowed himself to disagree with Washington on key issues. Only Paraguay, with the removal in June of President Fernando Lugo, is now out of step with its neighbours.

But none of these developments matches the significance of the elections in Venezuela. A defeat for Chávez would represent (whatever his rival may say) a return to pre-1999 Venezuela. Another term in office would extend Chávez's reign to 18 years; that's a great deal, perhaps too much. Even so, Venezuela's social transformation over so long a period, under a democratically elected president, is without parallel in contemporary history.

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Dear friends and colleagues,

I hope you will join us Wednesday, September 19<sup>th</sup> at 7pm at the Bolivarian Hall (2443 Massachusetts Ave) for an exciting event on Venezuela's upcoming presidential elections. David Gespass, the president of the National Lawyers Guild, and Kathleen Johnson, an expert in international human rights law and a member of the International Committee will speak on a panel following the screening of a short documentary film produced by the National Electoral Council (CNE) on the history of Venezuela's electoral system. Both traveled to Venezuela earlier this year to observe the primary elections of opposition parties, and have extensive experience in monitoring elections abroad. Between them, they have participated in upwards of twenty election missions. A reception will follow the event. Find the full information below and in the attached flyer.

Please RSVP to [ogoumbri@venezuela-us.org](mailto:ogoumbri@venezuela-us.org)

Best, Olivia



THE NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD AND  
THE EMBASSY OF THE BOLIVARIAN REPUBLIC OF VENEZUELA  
INVITE YOU TO THE DOCUMENTARY FILM SCREENING OF:

## EXPERIENCE IN DEMOCRACY

A LOOK AT VENEZUELA'S ELECTORAL SYSTEM PAST & PRESENT

PANEL DISCUSSION TO FOLLOW WITH:

### David Gesspass

President of the National Lawyers Guild

David Gesspass is president of the National Lawyers Guild, the first racially integrated national bar organization in the United States. Earlier this year in February he participated in an electoral accompaniment mission to Venezuela's opposition primary elections. He has participated as an observer and in other official capacities in elections in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Armenia.

### Kathleen Johnson

International Committee

Kathleen Johnson is a member of the International Committee of the National Lawyers Guild and as such also witnessed Venezuela's 2012 primary elections. She has a master's degree in international human rights law and has observed or otherwise participated in 18 elections including those in Bosnia, Croatia, Estonia, Moldova, Macedonia, Albania, Pakistan and Afghanistan.

**WED, SEPT. 19, 7:00PM** BOLIVARIAN HALL  
2443 MASSACHUSETTS AVE. NW



NATIONAL LAWYERS GUILD

*The National Lawyers Guild and the Embassy of the  
Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela in Washington, D.C. invite  
you to  
the screening of the documentary film:*

**“Experience in Democracy: A Look at  
Venezuela’s Electoral System Past &  
Present”**

Panel discussion to follow with:  
David Gespass, President of the National Lawyers Guild  
Kathleen Johnson, International Committee

Wed, Sept. 19,  
7:00pm

Bolivarian Hall, 2443 Massachusetts Ave, NW

**RSVP: [ogoumbri@venezuela-us.org](mailto:ogoumbri@venezuela-us.org)**

David Gespass is president of the National Lawyers Guild, the first racially integrated national bar organization in the United States. Earlier this year in February he participated in an electoral accompaniment mission to Venezuela’s opposition primary elections. He has participated as an observer and in other official capacities in elections in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Armenia.

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Dear friends and colleagues,

I thought you would be interested in this article below as well as the news program (in Spanish) on the elections event featuring the National Lawyers Guild held earlier this week.

Best, Olivia

\*\*\*\*\*

**TV News Report (in Spanish) with interviews with President of the National Lawyers Guild and others:**

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=J5usGnvdL-Y&list=UUHb3cj2VXjAXC-mKZsRRspg&index=10&feature=plcp>

**Ahead of the October 7 Vote**

## **Forum on Venezuelan Elections Held in Washington**

**Published: 09/20/2012**

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With just 16 days until the presidential elections in Venezuela, the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the U.S. and the National Lawyers Guild held an event at the Bolivarian Hall on Wednesday night in Washington, DC, to provide information and debate about the upcoming vote.

The event included a screening of a documentary about improvements to Venezuela's electoral system and

remarks by panelists David Gesspass, the president of the National Lawyers Guild, and Kathleen Johnson, a human rights expert and member of the organization's international committee. They spoke about their trip to Venezuela in February of this year to observe the primary elections of opposition political parties and shared their impressions of the electoral system.

Gesspass, who has been an electoral observer in Bosnia, Croatia, Macedonia and Armenia, said that in February he noticed the increased professionalism of Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE). He added that he believes the institution is very transparent and advanced and unlike anything he has seen in any other part of the world.

Regarding the upcoming elections, Gespass said that the population appears widely informed about each of the candidates and he noticed while in Caracas that Venezuelans speak freely about politics and are vocal about their different opinions.

Meanwhile, Johnson, who has observed 18 elections in Eastern Europe and elsewhere, said that she was impressed by the high levels of women's participation in Venezuela.

"My impressions regarding the CNE is that the electoral process is very efficient, and there is no intimidation of any kind, the voting machines are very up-to-date and trustworthy which makes the electoral process safe," she said.

While in Washington, Gespass and Johnson will visit Congress to meet with members of the Progressive Caucus and the Subcommittee on Elections.

The National Lawyers Guild, founded in 1937 as the nation's first racially integrated bar association, is one of several U.S. organizations that will serve as electoral companions during the presidential elections in Venezuela on October 7.


For the October 7 vote, Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE) will operate 39,322 voting booths at a total of 13,810 voting centers throughout the country. Nearly 19 million Venezuelans are registered to vote, an amount equal to 96.5 percent of eligible adults.

Meanwhile, 100,495 Venezuelans are registered to vote at the country's diplomatic offices abroad, which will operate 304 voting booths throughout the world. In the United States, 36,915 are expected to vote at 90 different voting centers located at eight Venezuelan consulates.

[Click here](#) for more information about the elections in Venezuela.

**Press Office of the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / September 20, 2012**

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Dear friends and colleagues,

Thought you would be interested in this.

Best, Olivia



[Click aqui](#)

*Elecciones 201*

## **Election Bulletin I - 2012 Venezuelan Presidential Elections**

- 18.9 Million Venezuelans Vote on Sunday**
- 99.76% of Polling Stations are Open in Venezuela**
- Elections Proceed with Normalcy at Venezuelan Consulates in the U.S.**
- Venezuelans in Australia Exercise Their Right to Vote**
- Carter Center Says No Possibility of Fraud in Venezuela**

### **18.9 Million Venezuelans Vote on Sunday**

On Sunday as of 6:00 in the morning, over 18.9 million Venezuelan voters will go to the polls to elect a president for the 2013-2019 term.

The National Electoral Council (CNE) has opened 13,683 voting centers throughout the country so that registered voters – which account for about 97 percent of eligible adults – can exercise their right to vote.

Meanwhile, at the country's diplomatic offices around the world, where voting will occur manually instead of with the electronic machines used at home, 304 voting centers will be open to allow voting for the 100,495 citizens living abroad. This group represents 0.53 percent of the total electorate.

Citizens that wish to exercise their right to vote can verify their information through the CNE website ([www.cne.gob.ve](http://www.cne.gob.ve)) or by calling 0-800-VOTEMOS (8683676) or sending a text message with their national ID number to CNE-R (2637).

AVN/ Press Office of the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012.

### **99.76% of Polling Stations are Open in Venezuela**

The president of Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE), Tibisay Lucena, said that 99.76% of the polling stations have already been opened to allow voters to choose a president for

the period 2013-2019.

In an interview on the private channel Venezolana de Televisión (VTV), Lucena said that 99.83% of operators of the electoral information system are active.

"As of right now, I invite voters to come to the polls," Lucena said, "because the tables are already open, I invite them to vote with joy, tranquility and excitement."

She reminded voters that the only document needed is the national ID card known as the cédula de identidad, which will be accepted whether valid or expired. She also reiterated that voters are not allowed to campaign at the polls or wear items of clothing related to the candidates.

"Everything is prepared and ready for them to begin this beautiful day celebrating democracy. At this very moment, people can start voting with great joy," she said.

AVN / Press-Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012

### **Elections Proceed with Normalcy at Venezuelan Consulates in the U.S.**

Voting in Venezuela's presidential elections today is being carried out with normalcy at the country's eight consulates throughout the United States.

Consulates confirmed that voting booths were installed at the voting centers early this morning in Washington, Boston, Chicago, Houston, New Orleans, New York, San Francisco and Puerto Rico.

A total of 36,915 Venezuelans are registered to vote at these consulates, an amount equal to 0.53 percent of the country's total electorate.

Venezuela's consuls in the U.S. highlighted the efforts of the members and witnesses of each voting booth, including pro-government and opposition party representatives, whom they said "have been carrying out their duties responsibly since early this morning."

The consuls also thanked voters for doing their civic duty by participating in the elections.

Voting will occur at the consulates until 6:00 p.m. or as long as necessary if Venezuelans are still waiting in line to cast ballots.

For more information about Venezuela's elections and voting in the U.S. [click here](#).

AVN/ Press Office of the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012

### **Venezuelans in Australia Exercise Their Right to Vote**

The Venezuelan citizens residing in Australia were the first to cast their ballots in the country's presidential elections on Sunday in the city of Canberra.

On Sunday, Venezuela's embassies and consulates in 88 countries around the world will operate 304 voting booths to guarantee the right to vote of the country's 100,495 citizens living abroad. They represent 0.53 percent of the electorate and will vote using the manual system.

Over 18.9 million Venezuelans are registered to vote with the country's National Electoral Council.

AVN/ Press Office of the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012

### **Carter Center Says No Possibility of Fraud in Venezuela**

A report published Friday by the Carter Center, which is following the electoral process in Venezuela closely, rejected the possibility of fraud in Sunday's presidential vote and said fears regarding the secrecy of the ballot were unfounded.

Venezuela's elections on Sunday will use a completely electronic and computerized system that will verify voter identity through fingerprinting. The Carter Center calls it "one of the most highly automated systems in the world."

According to the AFP, in response to supposed fears among Venezuelans that their choices at the polls would be made public, the Carter Center report stresses that: "This concern has no basis. The software of the voting machines guarantees the secrecy of the vote."

The report goes on to state that "The software instructs the machines to scramble the order of the votes, scramble the order of the voter identifications, and to keep these scrambled files in two separate archives."

Meanwhile, representatives of different political parties have been involved in 16 different audits of the electronic system, and, the report states, technicians from the campaign for the opposition candidate Henrique Capriles have voiced their approval.

While Carter Center declined an official role in monitoring the elections, it will have a mission present in Venezuela with five experts. They are expected to conduct interviews and gather the observations of other organizations to create a post-election report.

The Associated Press reported that the president of Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE), Tibisay Lucena, said in an interview on the private TV channel Venevisión that no official results will be announced until all the voting centers have all closed and there is an irreversible trend in the returns.

Without giving a specific time, Lucena said the first results will be made known "about three hours after" voting concludes at 6:00 p.m. local time.

CNE Vice President Sandra Oblitas also said that the results will begin to be transmitted after the voting centers are closed, and an announcement will be made once the numbers are

"irreversible."

AFP/ Press Office of the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012

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## **Boletín especial I - Elecciones presidenciales venezolanas 2012**

- 18.903.143 venezolanos votan este domingo**
- 99,76% de las mesas electorales están abiertas**
- Con normalidad se desarrolla jornada electoral en consulados venezolanos en EEUU**
- Venezolanos en Australia primeros en ejercer su derecho al voto el 7-O**
- Centro Carter descarta posible fraude electoral en Venezuela**

### **18.903.143 venezolanos votan este domingo**

Este domingo a partir de las 6:00 de la mañana, un total de 18.903.143 electores serán los venezolanos y venezolanas que saldrán a ejercer su derecho al voto para elegir al presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela para el periodo presidencial 2013-2019.

El Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) ha habilitado un total de 13.683 centros de votación en todo el país, para que participen en los comicios presidenciales los casi 19 millones de venezolanos (97% de la población en edad para votar) inscritos en el Registro Electoral (RE).

Mientras tanto en el extranjero, donde el voto se ejecutará de manera manual, funcionarán un total de 304 mesas electorales que estarán ubicadas en embajadas y consulados venezolanos en 88 países, donde podrán ejercer su derecho al voto 100.495 ciudadanos (0,53% del padrón electoral).

Los ciudadanos que van a ejercer su derecho al voto podrán verificar sus datos a través del sitio web del CNE [www.cne.gob.ve](http://www.cne.gob.ve); llamando al 0-800VOTEMOS (8683676) o enviando un mensaje de texto con su número de cédula de identidad al CNE-R (2637).

AVN/ Prensa-Embajada venezolana en EE UU/ 7 de octubre de 2012

### **99,76% de las mesas electorales están abiertas**

El 99,76% de las mesas electorales están abiertas para que los electores puedan sufragar y elegir al Presidente de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela para el periodo 2013-2019, informó la presidenta del Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE), Tibisay Lucena.

A través de un contacto telefónico con Venezolana de Televisión (VTV), Lucena, detalló que el 99,83% de los operadores relacionados con el sistema de información están activados.

"Invito desde este momento a todos los electores para que se acerquen a los centros de votación,

porque las mesas ya están abiertas, vayan a votar con alegría, con tranquilidad y emoción", aseguró la presidenta del CNE.

Recordó a los electores que el único requisito para votar es presentar su cédula de identidad laminada esté o no vencida y que está prohibido hacer campaña electoral. "No se puede hacer campaña y vestir con elementos relacionados a los candidatos", recalcó Lucena.

"Todo está preparado y listo para que puedan iniciar esta hermosa jornada de la fiesta por la democracia. En este momento pueden empezar a votar con gran alegría", indicó.

AVN/ Prensa-Embajada venezolana en EE UU/ 7 de octubre de 2012.

### **Con normalidad se desarrolla jornada electoral en consulados venezolanos en EEUU**

En los ocho consulados venezolanos que operan en Estados Unidos se está llevando a cabo con toda normalidad el proceso de votación para elegir al Presidente o Presidenta de la República Bolivariana de Venezuela.

Las oficinas consulares - ubicadas en las ciudades de Washington D.C, Boston, Chicago, Houston, , New Orleans, Nueva York, San Francisco y Puerto Rico- instalaron las mesas de votación a tempranas horas de la mañana, según se pudo confirmar con cada uno de los cónsules generales.

36 mil 915 venezolanos y venezolanas están inscritos en el Registro Electoral para votar en los consulados venezolanos en Estados Unidos.

Los cónsules venezolanos en Estados Unidos coincidieron en resaltar la labor de los miembros de mesa y testigos, tanto de la oposición como de la coalición pro-gobierno, "quienes desde tempranas horas de la mañana han ejercido sus funciones responsablemente". Asimismo, felicitaron a las y los electores por la actitud cívica demostrada en el desarrollo de este proceso electoral.

La jornada electoral se desarrollará ininterrumpidamente en los ocho consulados ubicados en Estados Unidos hasta las 6:00 p.m.o hasta que hayan electores en espera por ejercer su derecho al voto.

Para mayor información sobre el proceso de votación en EE.UU para las elecciones presidenciales haga [click aquí](#).

AVN/ Prensa-Embajada venezolana en EE UU/ 7 de octubre de 2012

### **Venezolanos en Australia primeros en ejercer su derecho al voto el 7-O**

Los ciudadanos venezolanos residentes en Australia, se convirtieron en los primeros venezolanos en ejercer su derecho al voto en la ciudad de Canberra, localidad australiana.

Este domingo 7 de octubre, en 304 mesas electorales ubicadas en embajadas y consulados venezolanos de 88 países, ejercerán su derecho al voto en el extranjero 100.495 ciudadanos, un 0,53% del padrón electoral, que votará de forma manual.

18.903.143 venezolanos están habilitados por el Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE) para sufragar este domingo en los comicios presidenciales.

AVN/ Prensa-Embajada venezolana en EE UU/ 7 de octubre de 2012

### **Centro Carter descarta posible fraude electoral en Venezuela**

Expertos del estadounidense Centro Carter, el cual estudia el actual proceso electoral venezolano, descartaron que pueda haber fraude y consideraron infundados los temores de que pueda violarse el secreto del voto, según un informe emitido el pasado 5 de octubre, según información reseñada por AFP.

Las elecciones presidenciales venezolanas del domingo tienen como novedad este año la introducción de un sistema totalmente electrónico y computarizado, mediante el cual la identidad de los votantes será comprobada gracias a sus huellas dactilares. "El software de las máquinas de votación garantiza el secreto del voto", señala el informe de los expertos.

"Este indica a las máquinas mezclar tanto el orden de los votos como el orden de la identificación de los votantes y mantener dichos expedientes mezclados en dos archivos separados", destacó el texto citado por AFP.

Los propios técnicos del movimiento del candidato opositor, Henrique Capriles, han mostrado su conformidad con este nuevo método, destacó el texto. Otra preocupación esgrimida por observadores y medios de comunicación son la posibilidad de "inflar" las listas electorales.

El Centro Carter no monitoreará el día de los comicios, pero enviará una misión integrada por cinco expertos que luego harán entrevistas y recopilarán las observaciones de otras organizaciones, para un informe post-electoral.

AFP agregó que sobre los resultados de las votaciones, la presidenta del CNE (Consejo Nacional Electoral), Tibisay Lucena, recordó en una entrevista con el canal privado Venevisión que para hacer el anuncio oficial se deben cumplir "dos premisas", como son el cierre de todos los centros de votación y que las cifras del escrutinio "sean irreversibles".

Sin comprometer una hora específica, Lucena explicó que "aproximadamente unas tres horas después" del cierre de las mesas de votación, fijado para las 18:00 (hora local, 22:00 hora GMT) aunque el plazo puede ampliarse en caso de que se mantengan electores en los centros de votación, se podrían anunciar los resultados.

En el mismo sentido se había pronunciado la rectora Sandra Oblitas, quien explicó que una vez que se cierran los centros se iniciará la transmisión de datos y que dos horas más tarde, aproximadamente, se pueden estar dando los resultados, cuando los números sean "irreversibles",

señaló AFP.

AFP/ Prensa-Embajada venezolana en EE UU/ 7 de octubre de 2012

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**Elecciones 2012-2013**



## **Election Bulletin II - 2012 Venezuelan Presidential Elections**

**-International Accompaniers Highlight Calm During Venezuelan Elections**

**- President Chávez Exercises Right to Vote Alongside Venezuelan People**

**- Venezuelan Presidential Candidate Capriles Votes in Caracas**

**-Venezuela's Electoral Council Says 100% of Voting Booths are Open**

### **International Accompaniers Highlight Calm During Venezuelan Elections**

International accompaniers including former Colombian Senator Piedad Cordoba, Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú, and Ulises Montoya Alberti of the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) say Venezuela's elections are occurring with normality and there is a sense of happiness and responsibility among voters.

"What is happening in Venezuela is extraordinary and marvelous," Córdoba said before taking a tour of voting centers. "I wish that in my country we could see such impressive crowds, such impressive lines, the organization and participation of the people and their interest in a crucial day like today."

Menchú, who hails from Guatemala, said "we are very excited because there are places where people already voted in large part and other places where people are still waiting. Everything has been normal. Our duty is to evaluate the environment and just wait until the vote tallying happens."

Alberti, who is part of the mission of UNASUR, said he had already visited several voting centers in Venezuela's most populous state of Miranda, where he saw normality and strong organization.

"We've been in Guarenas, Guatire and Petare and we see total normality, much order and good organization," Montoya said. He and about 50 other electoral monitors from various South American countries were visiting a school where voting was taking place in the low-income Caracas neighborhood of Petare.

Venezuela's electoral centers will be open through 6:00 p.m. However, any centers where people are still waiting to vote after that time will remain open as long as needed, as required by the country's constitution.

*AVN/ Press Office of the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012*

*Ir arriba*



### **President Chávez Exercises Right to Vote Alongside Venezuelan People**

After casting his ballot this afternoon at a school in the "23 de Enero" neighborhood of Caracas, Venezuelan President Hugo Chávez said "the Venezuelan people are teaching us a lesson" by peacefully turning out to vote in large numbers and demonstrating that the country "is a mature democracy that continues maturing."

President Chávez said he had spoken with political party campaign chiefs, military leaders and the president of the National Electoral Council (CNE), all of whom indicated that "everything is going well."

He reminded voters that the polls will close at 6:00 p.m., but added: "I have the impression, based on the crowds and the lines, that this could go on past six this afternoon."

The leader also said that Venezuelans have, in the words of former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, an electoral system that is "the best in the world."

"If democracy has been reborn with great strength and been advanced and consolidated anywhere, it's in Latin America and the Caribbean, a zone of democracy. We are called on to consolidate it as a region of peace," Chávez said.

Before offering his statements and addressing the media, Chávez greeted international companions including U.S. actor Danny Glover, the Director of Cultural Studies of the Smithsonian Institution James Early, former Colombian Senator Piedad Córdoba and Guatemalan Nobel Peace Prize winner Rigoberta Menchú.

*AVN / Press Office of the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012*

*Ir arriba*

### **Venezuelan Presidential Candidate Capriles Votes in Caracas**

This afternoon, Venezuelan presidential candidate Henrique Capriles Radonski exercised his right to vote in the capital city of Caracas.

The candidate called on voters that were still waiting in line to cast ballots to be patient and thanked the members of his voting booth and security personnel for their contribution to the electoral process.

Radonski said: "Today we demonstrate to the world that we're the best. There will be time to rest and recover our energy in the coming days. Today's election is very exciting because it is of the undefeated."

*YVKE Mundial / Press Office of the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012*

*Ir arriba*

### **Venezuela's Electoral Council Says 100% of Voting Booths are Open**

The vice president of Venezuela's National Electoral Council (CNE), Sandra Oblitas, announced Sunday that 100 percent of the more than 39,000 voting booths throughout the country are now open.

Speaking at the Venezuelan Women's Association in the capital city of Caracas, where 1,514 were expected to turn out to vote, Oblitas said that Venezuelans have been going to the polls since very early this morning in an environment of peace and tranquility.

She added that so far there are no reports of problems with the electoral materials.

Oblitas called on the people to vote, saying: "This is a very simple process. The horseshoe [layout] permits a constant flow of voters through the voting booths."

There are a total of 39,018 voting booths available to Venezuelan voters today, which are being staffed by 506,141 members chosen randomly by the CNE.

AVN/ Press Office of the Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012

Ir arriba

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## **Boletín especial II- Elecciones presidenciales venezolanas 2012**

### **-Observadores internacionales resaltan normalidad en jornada electoral**

#### **- Presidente Chávez ejerce su derecho al voto**

#### **- Candidato Capriles ejerce su derecho al voto en Caracas**

#### **-CNE reporta 100% de las mesas electorales constituidas**

### **Observadores internacionales resaltan normalidad en jornada electoral**

Acompañantes internacionales como la ex senadora colombiana Piedad Córdoba, Rigoberta Menchú, premio Nobel de la paz, y Ulises Montoya Alberti, quien forma parte de los acompañantes de la Unión de Naciones Suramericanas (Unasur), destacaron la normalidad, alegría y la responsabilidad del pueblo venezolano en el proceso electoral que se lleva a cabo en el país.

"Lo que ocurre en Venezuela es extraordinario y maravilloso, ojalá en mi país uno pudiera ver el gentío tan impresionante, las colas tan impresionantes, la organización, la participación de la gente el interés por un día tan crucial como este de hoy", expresó Córdoba antes de hacer un recorrido por las mesas de votación de la unidad educativa.

Por su parte, Rigoberta Menchú señaló que "estamos muy emocionados porque hay lugares donde la gente ya votó en buena medida y en otros la gente está esperando. Todo ha sido normal. Nuestro deber es sentir el ambiente y nada más y esperar que llegue la hora en que se haga el conteo", enfatizó.

Asimismo, Montoya Alberti, manifestó que ya han recorrido varios centros de votación del estado Miranda, en los que se ha observado normalidad y organización.

"Hemos estado en Guarenas, Guatire y Petare (estado Miranda) y vemos total normalidad, mucho orden y buena organización", sostuvo Montoya, quien se encontraba con varios de sus compañeros de la Unasur en el centro electoral ubicado en la Unidad Educativa Nacional Dr. José de Jesús Arocha, en Petare. Recordó que aproximadamente 50 representantes de los países que conforman el bloque regional presencian los comicios presidenciales de este domingo en Venezuela.

Hasta las 6:00 de la tarde funcionarán de manera ininterrumpida los centros electorales. No obstante, deben de continuar aquellos centros que tengan electores en cola para sufragar, ya que es un derecho consagrado en la Constitución Bolivariana de Venezuela.

*AVN/ Prensa-Embajada venezolana en EE UU/ 7 de octubre de 2012*

*Ir arriba*

### **Presidente Chávez ejerce su derecho al voto**

En declaraciones ofrecidas luego de ejercer su derecho al voto en una escuela ubicada en la parroquia 23 de Enero, al oeste de Caracas, el presidente venezolano, Hugo Chávez, resaltó que "el pueblo venezolano nos está dando una lección", pues ha recibido reportes desde temprano de una afluencia masiva de electores, lo que da cuenta de "una democracia madura y en maduración" y de un proceso que transcurre en paz.

Señaló que ha conversado con los comandos políticos, los jefes militares y la presidenta del Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE), Tibisay Lucena, quienes le han señalado que "todo marcha bien".

Asimismo, comentó que si bien el horario de votación concluye a las 6:00 de la tarde, "tengo la impresión, por la afluencia y colas, de que esto pudiera pasar más allá de las 6 de la tarde".

Resaltó que el venezolano es, como dijo el expresidente de Estados Unidos Jimmy Carter, "el mejor sistema electoral del mundo", y añadió: "Si en algún lugar la democracia ha renacido con mucha fuerza y ha estado avanzando y consolidándose es en América Latina y el Caribe, una zona de democracia. Estamos llamados a consolidarla como zona de paz".

Antes de ofrecer sus declaraciones, Chávez saludó a la exsenadora colombiana y luchadora por la paz, Piedad Córdoba; a la líder indigenista guatemalteca y premio nobel de la paz, Rigoberta Menchú; al actor estadounidense, Danny Glover, y al director de estudios culturales y comunicaciones del prestigioso instituto estadounidense Smithsonian, James Early, entre otros acompañantes.

*AVN/ Prensa-Embajada venezolana en EE UU/ 7 de octubre de 2012*

*Ir arriba*

### **Candidato Capriles ejerce su derecho al voto en Caracas**

En horas de la tarde de este domingo 7 de octubre, el candidato a la presidencia de Venezuela Henrique Capriles Radonski ejerció su derecho al voto.

El candidato pidió a los electores que aún se encuentran en cola que tengan paciencia y saludó a los miembros de mesa y a efectivos del Plan República que han contribuido para que el proceso electoral se pueda realizar.

Radonski dijo: "Hoy demostramos al mundo que somos los mejores. Ya habrá tiempo para descansar y recuperar la energía de estos días. La elección de hoy es muy divertida porque es entre invictos".

*YVKE Mundial / Prensa-Embajada venezolana en EE UU/ 7 de octubre de 2012*

*Ir arriba*

### **CNE reporta 100% de las mesas electorales constituidas**

La vicepresidenta del Consejo Nacional Electoral (CNE), Sandra Oblitas, informó este domingo que 100% de las mesas electorales fueron constituidas en todo el país.

En la Asociación Venezolana de Mujeres, en la capital venezolana de Caracas, donde ejercen el derecho al voto 1.514 personas, Oblitas dijo que desde muy tempranas horas los venezolanos salieron a sufragar en un ambiente de paz y tranquilidad.

Añadió que hasta los momentos no tienen reportes de fallas con el material electoral en el país.

Oblitas también invitó al pueblo venezolano a votar y recordó que "Es un proceso muy sencillo. La herradura permite un flujo continuo de electores en la mesa de votación", indicó Oblitas.

En total, se constituyeron 39.018 mesas de votación, las cuales son atendidas por 506.141 miembros que fueron escogidos por sorteo para cumplir el servicio electoral.

*AVN/ Prensa-Embajada venezolana en EE UU/ 7 de octubre de 2012*

*Ir arriba*



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Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

Dear friends and colleagues,

On Sunday Venezuelan elections were carried out peacefully and with no major problems. The results were quickly announced by the CNE showing a record voter turnout of more than 80% and the latest numbers as of yesterday show that President Chavez won with almost 55% of the vote while his opponent, Capriles, took about 44.5%. For more details on the vote see here: <http://venezuela-us.org/2012/10/08/venezuela-reelects-hugo-chavez-for-2013-2019-presidential-term/>

Below you will find some news on the election process including an interview with electoral accompaniers/monitors from the US such as Danny Glover and the new president-elect of the National Lawyers Guild, Azadeh Shahshahani. I have also included an interesting op-ed in today's New York Times on the president's re-election.

Best, Olivia

**Interview with Danny Glover on Democracy Now!**

[http://www.democracynow.org/2012/10/9/danny\\_glover\\_record\\_venezuela\\_turnout\\_hands](http://www.democracynow.org/2012/10/9/danny_glover_record_venezuela_turnout_hands)

**Interview with Asadeh Shashahani on Free Speech Radio News**

<http://fsrn.org/audio/hugo-chavez-elected-fourth-term-venezuela-amid-high-voter-turnout/10985>

**The New York Times**

October 9, 2012

**Why Chávez Was Re-elected**

**By MARK WEISBROT**

[http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/10/opinion/why-chavez-was-re-elected.html?\\_r=0&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1349788665-B3OUCAXVnq0nm5ydL8BMg&pagewanted=print](http://www.nytimes.com/2012/10/10/opinion/why-chavez-was-re-elected.html?_r=0&adxnnl=1&adxnnlx=1349788665-B3OUCAXVnq0nm5ydL8BMg&pagewanted=print)

WASHINGTON — For most people who have heard or read about Hugo Chávez in the international media, his reelection on Sunday as president of Venezuela by a convincing margin might be puzzling.

Almost all of the news we hear about him is bad: He picks fights with the United States and sides with “enemies” such as Iran; he is a “dictator” or “strongman” who has squandered the nation’s oil wealth; the Venezuelan economy is plagued by shortages and is usually on the brink of collapse.

Then there is the other side of the story: Since the Chávez government got control over the national oil industry, poverty has been cut by half, and extreme poverty by 70 percent. College enrollment has more than doubled, millions of people have access to health care for the first time and the number of people eligible for public pensions has quadrupled.

So it should not be surprising that most Venezuelans would reelect a president who has improved their living standards. That's what has happened with all of the leftist governments that now govern most of South America. This is despite the fact that they, like Chávez, have most of their countries' media against them, and their opposition has most of the wealth and income of their respective countries.

The list includes Rafael Correa, who was reelected president of Ecuador by a wide margin in 2009; the enormously popular Luiz Inácio Lula da Silva of Brazil, who was reelected in 2006 and then successfully campaigned for his former chief of staff, now President Dilma Rousseff, in 2010; Evo Morales, Bolivia's first indigenous president, who was reelected in 2009; José Mujica, who succeeded his predecessor from the same political alliance in Uruguay — the Frente Amplio — in 2009; Cristina Fernández de Kirchner, who succeeded her husband, the late Néstor Kirchner, winning the 2011 Argentine presidential election by a solid margin.

These leftist presidents and their political parties won reelection because, like Chávez, they brought significant — and in some cases huge — improvements in living standards. They all originally campaigned against “neoliberalism,” a word used to describe the policies of the prior 20 years, when Latin America experienced its worst economic growth in more than a century.

Not surprisingly, the leftist leaders have seen Venezuela as part of a team that has brought more democracy, national sovereignty and economic and social progress to the region. Yes, democracy: even the much-maligned Venezuela is recognized by many scholars to be more democratic than it was in the pre-Chávez era.

Democracy was at issue when South America stood together against Washington on such issues as the 2009 military coup in Honduras. The differences were so pronounced that they led to the formation of a new hemisphere-wide organization — the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States, which excluded the United States and Canada — as an alternative to the U.S.-dominated Organization of American States.

Here is what Lula said last month about the Venezuelan election: “A victory for Chávez is not just a victory for the people of Venezuela but also a victory for all the people of Latin America ... this victory will strike another blow against imperialism.”

The administration of George W. Bush pursued a strategy of trying to isolate Venezuela from its neighbors, and ended up isolating itself. President Obama has continued this policy, and at the 2012 Summit of the Americas in Colombia he was as isolated as his predecessor.

Although some media have talked of Venezuela's impending economic collapse for more than a decade, it hasn't happened and is not likely to happen.

After recovering from a recession that began in 2009, the Venezuelan economy has been growing for two-and-a-half years now and inflation has fallen sharply while growth has accelerated. The country has a sizeable trade surplus. Its public debt is relatively low, and so is its debt-service burden. It has plenty of room to borrow foreign currency (it has borrowed \$36

billion from China [pdf], mostly at very low interest rates), and can borrow domestically as well at low or negative real interest rates.

So even if oil prices were to crash temporarily (as they did in 2008-2009), there would be no need for austerity or recession. And hardly anyone is predicting a long-term collapse of oil prices.

Venezuela's economy does have long-term problems, such as relatively high inflation and inadequate infrastructure. But the substantial improvement in people's income (the average income has risen much faster than inflation under Chávez), plus gains in health care and education, seems to have outweighed the government's failings in other areas, including law enforcement, in the minds of most voters.

The U.S. economic embargo against Cuba has persisted for more than half a century, despite its obvious stupidity and failure. American hostility toward Venezuela is only about 12 years old, but shows no sign of being reconsidered, despite the evidence that it is also alienating the rest of the hemisphere.

Venezuela has about 500 billion barrels of oil and is burning them currently at a rate of one billion barrels a year. Chávez or a successor from his party will likely be governing the country for many years to come. The only question is when — if ever — Washington will accept the results of democratic change in the region.

*Mark Weisbrot is codirector of the Center for Economic and Policy Research in Washington and president of Just Foreign Policy.*

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This material is distributed by Olivia Gombri, on behalf of the Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela. Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.



Dear friends and colleagues,

I thought you would be interested in some information on Venezuela's recent presidential elections. Our fact sheet here: ( <http://venezuela-us.org/live/wp-content/uploads/2009/08/10-17-12-FS-Update-on-Presidential-Elections.pdf> ) lays out the final results and some statistics. I have also included some articles on the issue below.

Best, Olivia

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<http://thehill.com/blogs/congress-blog/presidential-campaign/262827-an-honest-outcome-in-venezuela-but-what-about-here>

## THE HILL'S **Congress Blog**

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Where lawmakers come to blog

### **An honest outcome in Venezuela, But what about here?**

By Antonio Mugica, CEO, Smartmatic - 10/18/12 04:00 PM ET

It was a result that might predictably raise skeptical eyebrows among many Americans. The recent reelection of Venezuelan President Hugo Chavez came amidst a polarized political atmosphere and resulted in a victory for a man whose relationship with the United States has been contentious, to say the least.

Americans need only remember their own systemic misadventures in Florida in 2000 to reflect on how vulnerable the election process can be to either intentional manipulation or chaotic breakdown.

Well, the good news is that technology has steadily advanced in recent years to a point where, no matter how passionate the partisanship, the safeguards are readily available to ensure honest reports anywhere and everywhere. The Venezuelan election is a superb case in point and there is much that can and should be learned from the solutions that were in place there.

Full disclosure: my company was a big part of that solution. But while I am not disinterested, I am confident that even a brief review of what was achieved in Venezuela has broader relevance for anyone interested in the proper workings of the democratic process.

Indeed, the solutions extend far beyond the operations of any single company. Since 2004, we have worked alongside electoral authorities throughout the globe, working for experts in charge of running elections in Belgium, the United States, Brazil, the Philippines, Venezuela, and some other countries – as well as collaborating with recognized organizations and political entities that monitor elections, such as the Carter Center, the United Nations, the European Union, and the Organization of American States. We have taken advantage of their experience and wisdom, incorporating their many great ideas and recommendations in order to make our own contributions stronger and more comprehensive.

In Venezuela, we have not only worked with electoral authorities but with the political parties themselves as well as national and international observers. The result was historic: the first end-to-end automated election in history, with the most advanced system in existence, as voiced by politicians from the far left to the far right, from Patagonia to Switzerland and everything in between.

It was also the first election ever to use biometric voter authentication, guaranteeing one-person-one-vote. These systems were tested – in the most turbulent political fires – to such an extent that, in terms of its long-range importance, this election may be remembered less for the fact that Chavez was reelected and more for the fact that, like it or not, he was reelected honestly and that the means were at hand to prove it unequivocally.

If there was one key feature to support this boast, it was the unprecedented and unparalleled level of auditability that was achieved. During the months preceding the election, the source code, the priming procedures of voting machines, the operation of the biometric authentication system, electronic ballots, digital signatures, shared passwords (between opposition and government) and all software components, were thoroughly scrutinized and successfully validated by representatives of all parties involved, in several test runs and through more than seventeen audits.

It goes further. On Election Day, each Venezuelan voter had the opportunity to verify, through the printed vote receipt (also called Voter Verified Paper Audit Trail), that his or her intent was registered accurately. Besides all these audits, and after polls closed, political parties, authorities, observers, and citizens audited nearly 53% of voting machines by contrasting the printed tallies of each machine with the printed receipts of the votes that voters had deposited, one at a time, into ballot boxes.

In all those audits, no discrepancies were found whatsoever, not even a single vote.

Other features of the system likewise contributed, in record time, to reliably arrive at official results that the contenders unequivocally accepted. As in any other fully automated process, human error was eliminated as a factor potentially able to impair results. By eradicating the high levels of discretion that electoral operators used to have in manual elections, they could not be subject to any kind of political pressure. Credibility in the court of public opinion was thus maximized. Turn-out was 81%, on a country where vote is not compulsory, which is a record by any standard, and that it clearly shows very high trust in the voting process in a country so polarized, that almost no other institution gets more than 60% credibility among the whole

population.

Within minutes after the last polling station closed, authorities had in their hands enough objective data to proclaim the will of the majority and persuade even the most acrimonious supporters of the losing candidates that the results were accurate. We know that there are many areas of the world where such systems will still need to be installed, and that there may be stubborn resistance from some candidates and their supporters to any state-of-the-art solution guaranteeing that vox populi rings out loud and clear.

But, thanks to what was so conspicuously achieved in Venezuela, global watchdogs now have leverage to insist on the fullest compliance by all sides in any election anywhere. As the company that created and deployed the decisive technologies in this week's Venezuelan election, we take exceptional pride in effectively eliminating all excuse for anything less than foolproof oversight.

We stand ready to support any mission to ensure that that message is heard around the world, no matter how poor the nation or how tainted its past political culture.

*Mugica is the CEO of Smartmatic.*

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## Getting Elections Right in Venezuela and the US

<http://truth-out.org/opinion/item/12192-getting-elections-right-in-venezuela-and-the-us>

Friday, 19 October 2012 00:00 By [Antonio Gonzalez](#), Truthout | Op-Ed



(Photo: [Ho John Lee / Flickr](#)) Across the U.S., organizations like [mine](#) are racing against the clock to try to ensure that traditionally marginalized minority communities are registered to vote and have equal access to the polls. With shoestring budgets, and relying mainly on volunteers, we face obstacles which may grow even more formidable if state voter ID laws are upheld in the courts. Despite our best efforts, too many U.S. citizens (millions according to some estimates) may be excluded - through unfair ID requirements, voter intimidation, and other shenanigans like last minute polling place changes - from voting on November 6th.

In Venezuela, the National Electoral Council (CNE, following the Spanish abbreviation) has been engaged in a similar campaign to ours, though with a great deal more human, financial and technical resources. Regardless of what one may think of Venezuelan president Hugo Chávez and his policies, we can learn from the achievements of the CNE, an independent branch of the Venezuelan government that was established in 1999.

Since its creation, the CNE has massively registered new voters and created thousands of new voting centers. As a result, electoral participation in Venezuela has consistently grown and is now among the best in the world. Seventy-five percent of voters cast ballots in the presidential elections in 2006, and 81 percent of voters participated in the presidential elections there on October 7th. It was the most people to have ever voted in an election in Venezuela's history, and it was praised as a triumph for democracy from all sides: the opposition, the government, the CNE, and foreign governments and organizations.

The CNE has also achieved great success in registering young people and members of traditionally disenfranchised Afro-descendent and indigenous communities in remote and deprived regions of the country. Moreover, Venezuela passed an amnesty law in 2004 to naturalize its undocumented immigrant population (mostly Colombians and Ecuadorians -10% of the population!). As a result, over 96% of the country's eligible citizens are now registered to vote, as compared with only 65% in the U.S.

In Venezuela, elections – as in many other Latin American countries – are on Sundays in order to encourage greater participation.

In contrast, the Florida state legislature just banned early voting on the Sunday before Election Day, a practice which had resulted in significant numbers of minority voters heading to the polls in the November 2008 election.

Perhaps most importantly, the CNE has established a transparent and sophisticated electronic voting system which former president Jimmy Carter recently referred to as "the best in the world."

Touch-screen electronic voting machines produce paper receipts confirming the voter's selection. These receipts are then placed in sealed ballot boxes that can afterward be counted in order to verify that the electronic results are accurate. At the end of election day, members of both opposition and pro-government parties carry out random audits of over 50% of the boxes carrying paper receipts, a much greater statistical sample than is needed to discount the possibility of fraud. No wonder that even opposition voters had few complaints about the electoral process – other than long lines, due to the massive turnout.

In contrast, many voting systems in the U.S. are difficult to audit, and in the 2000 presidential election the results were so disputed that they had to be determined by the U.S. Supreme Court.

I have had the privilege of monitoring several elections in Venezuela over the last few years. Although there is much political polarization in the country, elections are well organized,

massively participatory and considered a point of national pride by the citizenry no matter what their political inclination.

The U.S. may be an economically and technologically advanced nation, but in the area of elections, we could learn a thing or two from Venezuela. It's unacceptable that the great American experiment in democracy continues to make it difficult for so many poor and minority citizens to exercise their most basic political right. It's time for our nation to work together to ensure that in every state and in every county, all voting age, eligible citizens can register and vote in an atmosphere free from intimidation and unfair electoral practices.

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<http://www.nlginternational.org/news/article.php?nid=495>

October 11, 2012

## **A Fully Transparent System: Investing in Democracy in Venezuela**

### **National Lawyers Guild**

By Susan Scott and Azadeh Shahshahani

As part of an eight-member delegation from the National Lawyers Guild, we spent the week leading up to the October 7 Venezuelan presidential election in Caracas, learning about the electoral system that Jimmy Carter has called "the best in the world."

On the day of the election, we observed it in action all over the country as part of a group of more than 220 international parliamentarians, election officials, academics, journalists, and judges. As predicted by the vast majority of polling organizations, Hugo Chavez was re-elected by a double digit margin (55.11% to 44.27%) with an unprecedented turnout of 80.9%.

Free and fair elections are only one feature of a democracy, but in Venezuela, elections have become something more—a national project which knows no party and constitutes a major investment.

What makes Venezuela's electoral system stand out resides in a combination of factors. The Bolivarian project of "21st Century Socialism" and Latin American integration, initiated by Hugo Chavez and his supporters after his first election in 1998, is a fundamentally democratic project. Chavez has repeatedly emphasized that its legitimacy and viability lies in the will of the people as expressed in free and fair elections. The 1999 Bolivarian Constitution was itself drafted by an assembly of elected members with significant popular input and was adopted in a national referendum by a 72% popular vote. It provides for an independent National Electoral Council (CNE), chosen by the elected National Assembly (Congress), and with a constitutional status equal to the other four branches of government (executive, legislative, judicial, and Poder Ciudadano, "People's Power," which includes the Attorney General, Human Rights Defender, and Comptroller General). The Constitution provides for more than the election of political representatives – there are provisions for referenda to change the Constitution (used in 2007 and

2009), referenda to abrogate laws, and even for recall of the president (attempted in 2004).

As more and more elections are conducted under the CNE's leadership (28 since the Bolivarian Constitution) and more electoral laws and regulations passed, the electoral system has become increasingly trusted and respected by the Venezuelan populace. The system has been used by unions to elect leadership and even by the opposition to elect its standard bearer in a primary last February (also witnessed by an NLG delegation).

Since the 1998 election of Hugo Chavez and the 1999 adoption of the Bolivarian Constitution, voter registration has climbed from 11 million in 1998 to almost 19 million today, as a result of a robust registration program throughout the country, targeting the country's poorest communities. The number of polling places has increased from 20,202 in 1998 to 38,239 in 2012.

Perhaps the most outstanding aspect of the Venezuelan electoral system is the technology used to record, verify, and transmit the votes. The technology provides for accessible electronic voting with a verifiable paper trail and instant transmission of vote counts from remote locations to CNE headquarters. CNE's anti-hacking and multiple transparent audit and identity authentication systems have put to rest past opposition claims of fraud.

At each of the polling stations we visited, there were observers present representing both the Capriles and the Chavez camps. The observers expressed satisfaction with the integrity and transparency of the process, regardless of their political affiliation.

We were present at the CNE headquarters in Caracas for the announcement of the election results within a few hours of the closing of the more than 38,000 polling stations throughout the country. And we watched as Capriles conceded on television with the next hour.

What struck us most was the national commitment to democracy as showcased by the very level of financial and popular investment in the entire system. Aside from the cost for the technology transfer from the Venezuelan company that designed the machines (Smartmatic), there is the cost of producing, maintaining, repairing, packing, and transporting the 46,000 machines, each with its separate electronic ballot and fingerprint authentication machines, as well as the significant investment in training field operators for polling stations all over the country. The CNE employs over 400,000 people to do the work that relates directly to the electoral process. We can only begin to imagine all the other jobs that result from this complex national process to ensure a fully transparent democratic system.

Susan Scott is the National Lawyers Guild International Committee Co-Chair.

Azadeh Shahshahani is President-Elect of the National Lawyers Guild.

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Additional information is available at the Department of Justice, Washington, D.C.

Dear friends and colleagues,

I thought you would be interested in this news on Venezuela's election today and some impressions by US electoral companions.

Best, Olivia

<http://venezuela-us.org/2012/10/07/danny-glover-congratulates-venezuelans-on-elections-%E2%80%9Cjob-well-done%E2%80%9D/>

## Danny Glover Congratulates Venezuelans on Elections: "Job Well Done"

Published: 10/07/2012

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A group of more than 15 representatives from the United States were in Venezuela today to act as international companions during the country's presidential elections, which proceeded in an environment of calm. Among them was actor Danny Glover, who said: "Congratulations to the people of Venezuela. Job well done."

"Both sides worked hard," Glover said. "Any electoral process that

creates so much transparency, so much engagement, is important for the Venezuelan people first. That means simply that they have faith that their vote, their voice, means something."

Also present to witness the voting was James Early, a board member of the Institute for Policy Studies (IPS) in Washington, DC. According to Early, "representatives of both candidates... in every instance have said that the process and procedures for voting are transparent and give them the utmost confidence that their choice for president will be cast with understanding, ease, and without fear of fraud."

Early said his activities included "attending presidential campaign rallies of both candidates, visiting polling sites to see and hear explanations of the voting process and the up-to-date



automated voting machines, and talking directly to residential voluntary election representatives of both candidates.”

Other U.S. accompaniers included representatives from the National Lawyers Guild, Rainbow Push Coalition, Trans Africa Forum, and former Massachusetts Congressman William Delahunt.

**Press – Venezuelan Embassy to the U.S. / October 7, 2012**

CURRENT NEWS, News

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Dear friends and colleagues,

I thought you would be interested in these two op-eds by former Congressman William Delahunt and actor Danny Glover on their experience during the presidential elections in Venezuela.

Regards, Olivia

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**Boston Globe**  
**THE PODIUM**

## **A new role for the US and Venezuela**

**By William Delahunt**

OCTOBER 30, 2012

<http://bostonglobe.com/opinion/2012/10/30/podium-venezuela/EJ6Jd2yRKfaJ76HYrXb4WJ/story.html>

The recent election in Venezuela offers an opportunity to improve the US-Venezuela bilateral relationship. On Oct. 7th, President Hugo Chavez was reelected to a new six-year term by a nine point margin. I — along with hundreds of other international witnesses — was duly impressed with the transparency of the electoral process and the enthusiasm of Venezuelans for democracy. Eighty-one percent of registered voters went to the polls! This turnout was remarkable when compared to the United States and other “mature” democracies.

Whether or not one agrees with Chávez’s policies, there can be no doubt that he won these elections fairly. There are so many checks and balances in the electoral system in Venezuela that there is virtually no room for fraud. The voter registry, the voting machines, the electronic ballot and the data transmission system are all fully audited by representatives of all the different political parties and independent observers.

Former President Jimmy Carter recently called the Venezuelan voting system “the best in the world.” He noted that the voting machines print out a paper receipt that voters can look at to verify that their selection was recorded correctly, and poll workers check those receipts against the electronic tally.

I was particularly struck by the atmosphere of peacefulness and mutual respect in the voting centers, where monitors from both pro-government and opposition groups were present. In contrast with elections past, the two main candidates manifested a similar attitude. Once the election authorities announced the results, opposition candidate Henrique Capriles rapidly conceded defeat, and he quickly scolded “radical” opposition supporters who insisted on alleging that fraud had taken place, despite no evidence to support their claims. Chávez also behaved gracefully, calling Capriles the following day to express his willingness to work together to mitigate the polarization that divided Venezuelans.

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Most of Venezuela's political leadership — following a tumultuous power struggle, during which a coup d'Etat and violent protests occurred — appear to have accepted to follow the democratic rulebook and be more tolerant of one another. This is an important step forward, and the United States should encourage Venezuelans to continue seeking common ground, rather than support one group over another, as has at times been the case in recent years.

Most importantly, over 55 percent of Venezuelan voters cast their vote in favor of Chávez. The United States should respect this outcome and seek to improve relations in areas where we can agree. Commercial relations between our two countries have generally been excellent, despite political differences, and both countries would greatly benefit from their expansion.

Venezuela will no doubt continue to play a central role in the region's new multilateral cooperation and consultation mechanisms, such as the Union of South American Nations (UNASUR) and the Community of Central American and Caribbean States (CELAC). The United States, which has increasingly found itself isolated in regional forums, would do well to find ways to work with these new groups on important issues such as drug trafficking and energy cooperation. Improved relations with Venezuela would greatly facilitate this task.

Our government will certainly have important differences with Venezuela, particularly in the area of international relations. But we can agree to disagree, as we do with many other partners throughout the world. I am convinced that the Venezuelan government is prepared to respond favorably to such an initiative.

*Retired US Representative William D. Delahunt is chairman of the Venezuela-US Friendship Group*

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**Institute for Policy Studies-Foreign Policy in Focus**

## **Why Chavez Won Again**

**By Danny Glover**

**October 30, 2012**

[http://www.fpip.org/articles/why\\_chavez\\_won\\_again](http://www.fpip.org/articles/why_chavez_won_again)



I had the privilege of traveling to Venezuela and witnessing the country's October 7 presidential election and watching the South American country's extraordinarily active and engaged citizenry in action. An impressive 81 percent of the electorate participated in a transparent and secure electoral process that former president Jimmy Carter reportedly referred to as the best in the world.

President Hugo Chavez's 10-point margin of victory over opposition candidate Henrique Capriles stands as a testament to the enduring popularity of his participatory democracy programs and his government's focus on addressing the needs of the poor.

Capriles campaigned on a platform that supported the government's social programs, while criticizing inefficiencies in many government sectors and capitalizing on fears over high rates of violence and unchecked corruption. In reality, as former key supporters revealed, and the majority of voters affirmed at the ballot box, Capriles and his allies backed a sweeping neo-liberal program fundamentally opposed to the current government's state-led, pro-social economic policies and support for direct collaboration with citizens in improving their wellbeing.

In contrast to his prior contempt for the democratic decisions of Venezuelans—including a failed coup in 2002—Capriles formally conceded defeat shortly after the election results were announced. Although media coverage of Venezuelan politics might have led one to think otherwise, these presidential elections were about much more than Chavez, as significant as he may be as torch-bearer of the poor and marginalized.

### **Venezuela's Afro-Descendents**

I began to get a sense of the bigger picture when I visited the country for the first time nine years ago at the invitation of the Afro-Venezuelan Network. I saw how Venezuela's Afro-descendents—among the most under-educated, marginalized, and impoverished people in the country—were becoming proactive as full citizens under the Chavez government, increasingly participating in political decision-making at the local level and claiming a voice in regional, national, and even international affairs. And I became increasingly aware of the growing political collaboration among Afro-Venezuelans, the Chavez government, and the approximately 150 million people of African descent throughout Latin America and the Caribbean.

My initial impressions, informed by my university studies in economics and my professional experience in community development in San Francisco, were confirmed on each of my subsequent visits. I observed numerous social, educational, cultural, and economic development projects that were improving the lives of marginalized communities and facilitating direct citizen participation and critical engagement in broader national, regional, and global affairs.

The Chavez government has also helped raise awareness about the historical links between racial exploitation and disempowerment and the socio-cultural relationship between wealth and luxury versus inequality and misery. The government's policies, for which the majority of Venezuelan citizens of all backgrounds have voted for the last 13 years, are addressing the legacy of slavery and helping expose and overcome generations of discrimination based on race, class, and gender.

On my most recent trip to witness the elections, I was greatly moved by the extraordinary civility and enthusiasm of voters from across the political spectrum, despite the fact that the opposing campaign agendas clearly represent radically different visions for the people and the country. Though media accounts create the impression that extreme political polarization is pervasive throughout Venezuela, I witnessed an atmosphere of respect and tranquility at the voting centers.

At every voting booth, volunteers from both campaigns were present to ensure that citizens had access to the ballot box and could freely exercise their choice for president.

But the most important moment of my trip was the day after the election when I met with local leaders and activists from the Afro-Venezuela community of San Jose in Barlovento, on the northern coast of Venezuela. I conversed with community leaders descended from the "maroons"—Venezuelans who had escaped slavery and created self-sustaining communities over 400 years ago.

Youth leaders described the educational missions and government programs that provided them with unprecedented access to higher education. Members of workers' cooperatives discussed new state cacao processing factories co-managed by managers and workers that had helped lift the local economy and offered fair prices and social support to poor farmers. Other representatives of the community explained how new health and education missions were addressing the needs of communities that had had little or no access to basic services. In the small, poor community I visited, I learned about a state-run clinic focused exclusively on women's health issues. Though local leaders by and large expressed admiration for President Chavez and his policies, they also noted unresolved issues that they wanted to see addressed.

### **A Better Life**

More generally, life has improved for a great number of Venezuelans over the last decade. Poverty has been cut in half and extreme poverty cut by 70 percent. Free health care, education, and public pension programs have been greatly expanded, the minimum wage has steadily increased, and unemployment has dropped below 8 percent.

The most promising aspect of the Venezuelan government's social development agenda is the proactive effort to promote democratic engagement and citizen control over local conditions and possibilities. We should all take note that these efforts are taking place in the middle of a global financial, economic, and ethical meltdown, when many countries are sharply scaling back social policies and embracing the neoliberal policies Venezuela has repeatedly rejected.

A great deal of the foreign media coverage of Venezuela gives the impression that Chavez's social and economic policies are incoherent, unsustainable, and based on short-term electoral considerations. For years, the financial press has predicted an imminent collapse of the Venezuelan economy. But, in fact, Venezuela enjoys a large trade surplus and has relatively little public debt. That provides the government with lots of room for continued expansionary fiscal, monetary, and social development policies.

The press also often vilifies Chavez and portrays his supporters—a strong majority of the country—as poor, reverent masses who are blindly manipulated by populist rhetoric and occasional cash handouts. This portrayal is not only false, it is denigrating and injurious to the basic workings of democracy: ordinary people expressing their desires with visions of an improved quality of life, development projects, and a choice of political stewards to achieve their goals. Yet, nearly 14 years after Chavez was first elected, misrepresentations and outright

fabrications still prevail in mainstream U.S. papers, television news programs, and in the statements of politicians from both major parties.

If you want to understand how the Chavez administration continues to win free and fair elections, you need only hear the stories of formerly marginalized communities and look more carefully at the country's social and economic indicators. As I spoke with Afro-Venezuelans about their support for President Chavez and his agenda, I was reminded of the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., who said that we as a nation must undergo a "true revolution of values." As King explained, "A true revolution of values will soon look uneasily on the glaring contrast of poverty and wealth...and say, 'This is not just.'"

In the Oct. 7 elections, as in more than a dozen previous electoral cycles, Venezuela has shown that the majority of its people have a clear notion of justice and how it can be achieved. It is now time for those of us in the United States to look at our alliance with the elites of Latin America and say: This is not just.

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## VENEZUELA'S 2012 PRESIDENTIAL ELECTIONS

A model of transparency and democracy

This year, the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela will hold presidential elections on October 7 and state elections on December 16. In charge of both of these events is the National Electoral Council (CNE), the independent branch of government responsible for the transparency and efficiency of electoral processes. The CNE oversees all aspects of voting, from establishing the date of elections and registering voters to facilitating and monitoring campaigns, acquiring and fine-tuning the voting equipment, and auditing the system together with political party representatives. Its mission is to guarantee that everyone can exercise their right to vote in a safe and effective manner.

The CNE has been praised for its work by electoral experts both at home and abroad. Jennifer McCoy, the director of the Americas Program at the Carter Center, recently remarked that "the automated system in Venezuela is very sophisticated" and has been carefully designed to prevent fraud.

In the 11 years since the CNE was created, Venezuela's rate of voter registration has risen steadily to reach 96.5 percent (compared to 65.1 percent in the United States, where the voter registration rate is 65.1 percent). The country has also seen more frequent elections, increased rates of voter turnout, and improvements to the technologies used for voting. These advances are the result of efforts by the CNE to make Venezuela's electoral system one of the safest and most trusted in the world.

### VOTER EMPOWERMENT

While today Venezuela's electoral system is cited as a model for the region, this was not always the case. During much of the 20th century, a power-sharing pact between two political parties led to massive electoral fraud. The majority of Venezuelans were excluded from the political process. As scholars have pointed out, the country's democracy unraveled and frustration grew, leading to the election of President Hugo Chávez in 1998 as an outsider candidate promising solutions to poverty, inequality and corruption.

Encouraging popular participation in democracy and removing the old barriers to civic participation has been central to the government's task of improving the electoral system. Many citizens previously lacked the ID cards needed to register to vote or lacked access to voting centers or information about the process. Now, these things are widely available.

A program known as "Mission Identity" has issued over 2 million ID cards since it began in 2003. Thanks to the CNE's voter registration drives, which placed mobile registration booths in metro stations and other busy public places as well as remote regions of the country, 96.5 percent of eligible adults in Venezuela are now registered to vote - 19.1 million people out of a population of 27.1 million.

Public education campaigns by the CNE have made Venezuelans from all sectors of society aware of and enthusiastic about their electoral rights and responsibilities. It is also easier to vote than ever before. Since 2000, the CNE has increased the number of voting centers in Venezuela from 8,278 to 14,025, and the number of individual voting booths from 7,000 to 38,236. This means that citizens do not face long travel times that might prevent them from casting a ballot. New voting centers have been opened up in traditionally under-served areas such as poor urban neighborhoods, rural villages, and indigenous and Afro-Venezuelan communities. The 2012 elections will also feature special voting centers accessible to the handicapped.

The diversity of the electorate is also impressive. During the last presidential elections in 2006, delegates from the European Union found that women accounted for more than half of those that cast ballots, and that voter turnout among indigenous peoples was 75 percent – just as high as among the general population.

#### **TECHNOLOGICAL IMPROVEMENTS**

Venezuela's elections are among the most technologically advanced in the world. The CNE has established a single, unified system of voting throughout the country using the latest equipment to make the voting experience easy and effective, with mechanisms for auditing at all stages by voters, vote monitors, and electoral accompaniers.

Ahead of the last presidential elections, the CNE adopted measures to ensure voter confidence including pre-election audits in order to test the system, a process which the Carter Center affirmed took place "in extensive consultation with opposition representatives." Over a dozen pre-electoral audits have been conducted in 2012, helping to instill confidence in the system among people of all political persuasions. In May, the electoral registry was audited and found to be 99.85 percent accurate.

New this year is something called the Integrated Authentication System, a process by which each registered voter is uniquely identified using fingerprinting. On the day of voting, the electronic voting machines are activated only when a fingerprint that corresponds to the voter's ID number in the database is registered. This system prevents fraudulent behavior such as double voting and identity theft. Additionally, the machines print a paper receipt that can be checked by the individual voter as well as by the staff of the polling centers. At least 54 percent of the machines used nationwide are audited manually in this way after the polls close. Regarding that figure, Jennifer McCoy of the Carter Center has said: "Statistically you don't need that much... but that was agreed on with the political parties and it instills confidence."

These technological improvements have made voting and vote tallying faster and safer than ever before. Voters from across the political spectrum have consistently praised the process as free and fair. Teresa



Albanes, the president of the electoral commission of the opposition coalition Mesa de Unidad Democrática said during a visit to Washington that "so far everything tells us... that the automated system works." She rejected the possibility of fraud and said that the opposition candidate should work harder "to guarantee to the population that the use of the automated system is safe."

Meanwhile, when Jennifer McCoy was asked what has changed in Venezuela, she also indicated that the path of elections has become firmly established, with all sides trusting the system. She explained: "Ten years ago there was a high possibility of violence, very deep divisions. Now we see that there are still divisions regarding the future of the country, but the difference is that everyone accepts that the path of elections is the only way to choose leaders."

Likewise, during the last presidential elections in Venezuela, a 2006 mission of the Organization of American States (OAS) expressed satisfaction over "the high and exceptional rates of participation we witnessed and the conditions of normality and security that prevailed during the voting."

## **INTERNATIONAL ACCOMPANIMENT**

Since 2006, the CNE has used the model of international accompaniment rather than that of observation. The change is an important gesture of respect for the sovereignty of the Venezuelan people and their institutions as the highest authority. Accompaniment, a model that is also used in Mexico and Brazil, allows domestic electoral monitors to play the central role in ensuring that the voting takes place as it should and that the results are satisfactory. Meanwhile, international experts witness the entire voting process in a peer relationship, providing recommendations and suggestions.

It is important to note that all of Venezuela's recent major elections have been carefully audited by international accompaniers and declared free and fair by experts. Missions have been sent from U.S. organizations including the Carter Center, the National Lawyers Guild and the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) as well as larger, regional organizations like the OAS and the European Union. Their results have consistently noted free and fair elections, high voter turnout and diversity among voters, the efficiency and transparency of the voting centers, and the general atmosphere of peacefulness and tolerance. Here are just a few of their observations:

"Overall, the 2006 Presidential Elections were held in respect of national laws and international standards concerning electoral administration and the electronic voting system. The high turnout, and peaceful atmosphere in which they were held, together with the acceptance of results by all those involved, represent significant progress." – EU Observation Mission (2006)

"The Venezuelan voters displayed a level of engagement and enthusiasm often absent in the U.S.... Venezuelan voters showed up in droves in the early morning hours and were excited about engaging in this aspect of one's civic duty. Turnout was apparent among people of all ages and all income groups...

The voting machines and receipts were properly audited. The auditing process was witnessed by all of the relevant parties including representatives from the CNE, the incumbent and opposition political parties, military guards, and international observers." – NAACP (2006)

"The Carter Center is pleased that the CNE has taken a number of significant measures to protect the electronic voting system from external attack, such as encryption of data using standard industry algorithms, and the implementation of sophisticated data randomization mechanisms. Equally commendable is the introduction of a number of procedural measures that are intended to prevent physical tampering with the machines and voting materials, such as the inclusion of a 32-digit, alphanumeric serial number on each printed ballot receipt." – Carter Center (2006)

## A MODEL FOR THE REGION

As the opinions of international electoral accompaniers indicate, recent elections in Venezuela have been thoroughly scrutinized and found to be free and fair. The gains made by the CNE in terms of boosting transparency and popular participation have been consolidated over the course of more than a dozen electoral processes. Venezuela's electoral system has now become fully modern and democratic, emerging as a model for the region.

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**September 2012**

**Embassy of the Bolivarian Republic of Venezuela to the U.S.**

## **10 THINGS YOU SHOULD KNOW ABOUT ELECTIONS IN VENEZUELA**

**This year, Venezuela will hold presidential elections on October 7 and state elections on December 16. They will be overseen by the independent branch of government known as the National Electoral Council (CNE), which guarantees the efficiency and transparency of electoral processes.**

**Under Venezuela's new system of participatory democracy, 14 elections and referenda have been conducted in the last 11 years, while in the previous 40 years, just 25 elections were held.**

**Thanks to efforts by the CNE to increase voter participation, 96.5% of eligible adults in Venezuela are registered to vote. That's over 18.9 million people out of a population of about 27 million. The rate of unregistered voters has fallen to just 3.5%, compared to 20% in the past.**

**To facilitate voting, the CNE has increased the number of voting centers in Venezuela from 8,278 to 13,810 since the year 2000 and has increased the number of voting booths to 39,322.**

**To guarantee the right to vote among the 100,495 Venezuelans living abroad, the country's 126 diplomatic offices around the world will operate 304 voting booths during the 2012 presidential elections. There are 36,915 Venezuelans registered to vote in the U.S. at 90 booths located in eight different consulates.**

**Venezuela has had some of the region's highest rates of voter turnout in recent years. 75% of voters went to the polls in the 2006 presidential elections, and a record 66% voted in the last legislative elections in 2010.**

**Venezuela's 2012 elections will feature special voting centers accessible to the handicapped. This is one of several initiatives by the CNE to improve technologies and guarantee all citizens the right to vote.**

**To prepare for the 2012 elections, the CNE has conducted 17 different audits to the electoral registry, the electronic voting machines, and other tools. The different political parties participated in this process to ensure transparency.**

For the last dozen years, all major electoral processes in Venezuela have been audited and declared free and fair by electoral accompaniers such as the Carter Center, the NAACP, the National Lawyers Guild, the Organization of American States and the European Union. Their findings affirm the solidity of Venezuela's electoral system.

Former U.S. President Jimmy Carter, founder of the Carter Center, said in September 2012: "As a matter of fact, of the 92 elections that we've monitored, I would say the election process in Venezuela is the best in the world."

For more information, visit our website at [venezuela-us.org](http://venezuela-us.org) or write to us at [prensa@venezuela-us.org](mailto:prensa@venezuela-us.org)